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Space Gamer

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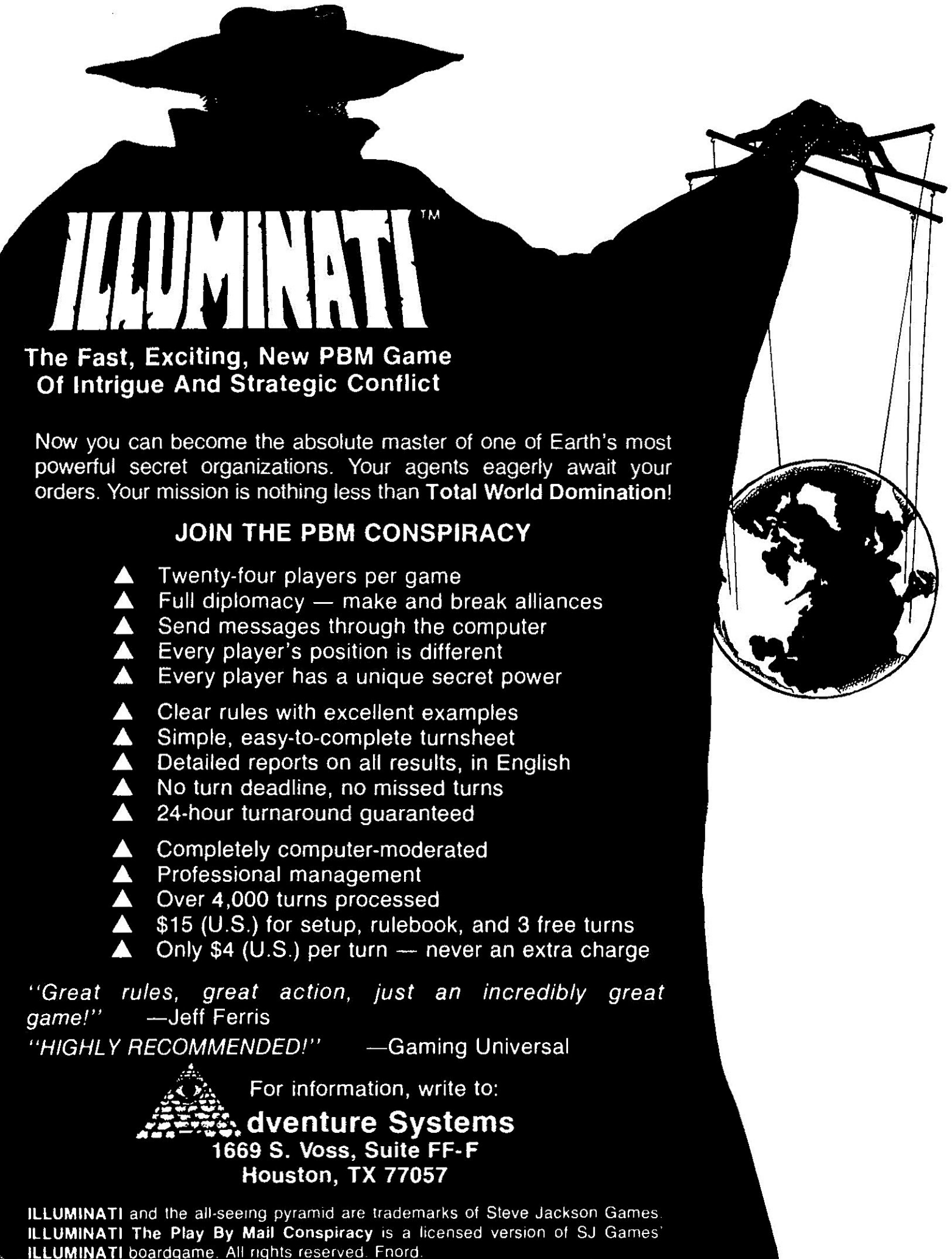

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SPECIAL SECTION

Tekumel

Professor M.A.R. Barker's world of the Petal Throne has been attracting attention lately. There's a new edition of his venerable roleplaying game, ***Empire of the Petal Throne***, and his first novel is just out from DAW Books. In our biggest issue ever, we look at Tekumel in depth.

An Introduction to Tekumel 15
***Swords & Glory* Review • F.P. Kiesche III and Steve Sherman** 17
Interview: M.A.R. Barker 20
Capsule Reviews of Tekumel Products • F.P. Kiesche III 26
Company Report: Tekumel Games, Inc. • Michael Mornard 29

ARTICLES

Converting *TFT* Characters to *T&T* • Tom Riley
No, it's not just by taking out the "F" 7
Riding the *Shockwave*: Strategy and Analysis • Philip Rennert
Tips and commentary on the new ***Ogre/G.E.V.*** expansion set 10
Mines in *Star Fleet Battles* • Walt Mizia
Transporter bombs and psychological warfare 30
Searching for Cthulhu in *Nightmare House* • Matthew J. Costello
Combining two good games 35

REVIEWS

***Ringworld* • Steve Peterson**
The president of Hero Games looks at Chaosium's new RPG 2
TOME's Cthulhu Scenarios • William A. Barton
Lovecraftian adventures from the Theatre of the Mind 32
Capsule Reviews 44

KEEPING POSTED

***Angelmar* • Scott D. Haring**
Medieval politics by mail 36
PBM Update 37

REGULAR FEATURES

Where We're Going • Steve Jackson 40
Counter Intelligence • Warren Spector 41
Letters 42
Finieous Fingers • J.D. Webster 61
Scanner 62
Convention Calendar 63
Advertiser's Index 63
Murphy's Rules • Michael von Glahn 64

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Featured Review

Larry Niven's

Ringworld

Steve Peterson

President, Hero Games

Larry Niven's "Known Space" novels and stories, one of the great science fiction series, have been turned into a roleplaying game by the Chaosium. Being an old fan of Known Space (and the Ringworld novels in particular), I waited eagerly for ***Ringworld*** to appear. But being a game designer and publisher myself, I've watched several companies try to create a bestselling game by wrapping a license around some junk: I wasn't so sure I wanted to see ***Ringworld***.

Appearance

Despite my misgivings, ***Ringworld*** arrived. My initial impression was *weight* — with over 200 pages inside, this game is *heavy*. The cover art is by Ralph McQuarrie, the same artist who did preproduction artwork for the *Star Wars* movies. The Chaosium paid him a princely sum for the cover painting, which, unfortunately, is nice but not exceptional. Inside, however, most of the artwork is supplied by Lisa Free, who has done a terrific job. This is the best interior artwork I've seen in any gaming product — a beautiful blend of style and subject matter. The art by Michael Blum (mostly of gadgets) just doesn't come anywhere near the quality of Ms. Free's. Overall, though, the graphic design and artwork work very well together, with the excellent production values we've come to expect from the Chaosium.

The Known Space stories cover a lot of ground (or space, if you will), but much information important to roleplayers wasn't dealt with in the stories. John Hewitt and the other authors had to create an immense amount of data to fill in the gaps. So much material was added that it just wouldn't fit in one box (hence the ***Ringworld Companion*** (see the accompanying capsule on page 4).

Character Creation

The game system is another variant on ***Basic Role-Playing*** (or the "Chaosium System," as Greg Stafford calls it). Character creation is handled in much the same manner as in ***RuneQuest*** — roll dice for your basic characteristics of Strength, Mass (replaces Size), Constitution, Intelligence, Power, Dexterity, Appearance, and Education (borrowed from ***Call of Cthulhu***). However, you must also roll your Home World (different gravities make a difference to your characteristics), your Defects (from Albinism to Hyperspace Blindspot Phobia), and your Chronological Age (since boosterspice is available, this is usually different from your Physiological Age). The Defects seem a bit much, with a 70% chance that your character will have at least one Defect; I don't remember quite so many defective people in Niven's stories, especially not among explorers.

Skills

Skills in ***Ringworld*** are acquired initially by spending Occupation Points; how you can spend them is determined by your Pursuits. You get Occupation Points three different ways: from your Education, your Pursuits, and your Special Interests. The problem with this generation method is that the possible range of Occupation Points goes from 120 to 8,000 or more! What this means is a tremendous disparity between starting characters in terms of their Skills. (Also, *everyone* wants to be a Dilettante, so you can learn any skill you want to; otherwise, you're limited to the skills available to your Pursuit.)

There are 50 or so skills in ***Ringworld***, ranging from Athletics to Reactionless Drive. The number of possible skills is infinite, since skills are set up so you can create specialty skills as needed. This is a very useful touch which most games ignore. You get to choose skills with restrictions based upon your background. Then you invest Occupation Points in making the skills better than the starting percentage. Skills can be improved later through training, experience, or research.

Combat

Combat is basically the standard Chaosium system, with a combat skill for each weapon expressed as a percentage chance; roll that chance on percentile dice, and you hit. Once you've hit, check the hit location of the blow for any special damage results. The important difference in *Ringworld* is in the combat sequence. Here Sherman Kahn has introduced a continuous "impulse" system. Each impulse is one second long. All explorers have an

For the uninitiated . . .

Larry Niven, one of the most popular authors in the science fiction field, published *Ringworld* in 1970. The novel went on to win Hugo and Nebula awards and eventually spawned a sequel, *The Ringworld Engineers* (1980).

The two novels form a capstone of sorts to Niven's voluminous "Known Space" sequence, a loosely-arranged chronicle of humanity's exploration of space during the next thousand years. Stressing imaginative backgrounds and far-future technology, the half-dozen novels and numerous stories of Known Space are adventure tales of a sort familiar to any roleplayer. Niven's fascinating universe of stasis fields, hyperspace, transfer booths, boosterspice, and bizarre alien races can be found in *World of Ptavvs* (1966), *Neutron Star* (1968), *A Gift From Earth* (1968), *Protector* (1973), and *Tales of Known Space* (1975), among others.

Ringworld deals with a mind-bogglingly vast structure, a solid ring a million miles wide and six hundred million in circumference, which orbits a distant star like a wheel rotating on its hub. The inner surface of this mysterious artificial habitat, larger than a million Earths, is populated by trillions (at least) of creatures of various races, both human and alien — but most are degenerate savages descended from the makers of the ring, whose civilization fell (literally — they lived in floating cities) thousands of years ago.

The novel raises many intriguing but unsolved mysteries. *The Ringworld Engineers* provides partial answers — but creates still further enigmas. These evidently will never be resolved: Niven has no plans for further books in the series. Of course, that's what he said after *Ringworld* . . .

—The Editors

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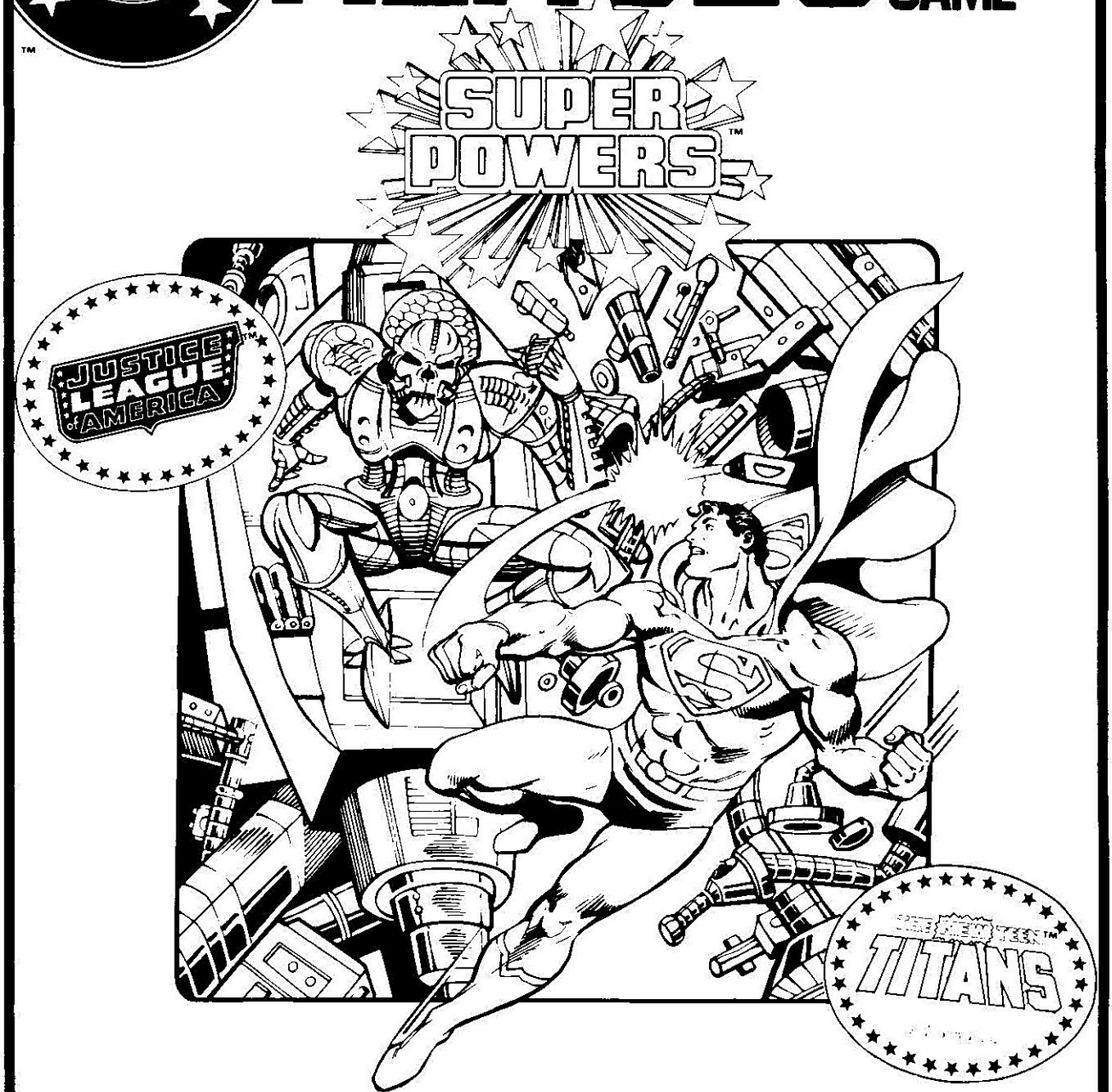

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RINGWORLD COMPANION (Chaosium, Inc.); $10. By Jon Hewitt, Lynn Willis, etc., etc. One 8½" x 11" 80-page booklet. Additional material for ***Ringworld***. Published 1984.

This book contains material that was left out of ***Ringworld*** because of space considerations, plus some new material. A set of errata for the ***Ringworld*** rules is also provided. More aliens (including martians, orcas, pierin, and thrintun) are included, along with many Ringworld animals and plants, more gadgets, a General Products #3-hull-based starship (the UNSS *Unpronounceable*), a discussion of hyperspace travel, Ringworld vehicles, two scenarios, and more.

Don't be fooled by the hideous cover — the ***Ringworld Companion*** is a good supplement. (Please, don't ever let Lisa Free work in color again!) The authors have included some valuable material that really should have been in ***Ringworld***, like a map of Known Space, a sketch of the Ringworld, and a map of the Great Oval Ocean — though why they saw fit to change the distances and geographic relationships Niven created is beyond me.

The contents are a brilliant addition to the material in ***Ringworld***, despite some problems. The scenarios are (or can be) connected to the one presented in ***Ringworld***, and are just as plain. They have nothing to do with the kind of activities or excitement in Niven's novels. The art and graphics are very good, although for some reason two different typestyles and formats are used in the book, which is rather confusing. Perhaps an *hommage* to ***Griffin Mountain***?

If you've got ***Ringworld***, you really should have this book, even though it brings your total investment up to $35. Such is the high price of having fun these days.

—Steve Peterson

Action Ranking based on their Dexterity; the Action Rank is usually a number between 3 and 6. Minor actions (like firing a ranged weapon or falling) take one impulse, while major actions (like drawing or aiming a weapon) take the explorer's Action Rank in impulses to perform. The GM starts the impulse count at 1 when the first character starts to do something, and then just marks off impulses until combat finishes.

This impulse system works very well; in fact, I like it better than the three or four other ways the Chaosium has come up with to sequence its combat. The impulse system could be adapted without much trouble to ***Call of Cthulhu*** or ***RuneQuest***, though ***Superworld*** might be a bit of a problem. The important thing to remember is that the impulse system makes guns very deadly, since once you've aimed it (a major action), *firing* the gun is only a minor action. You can fire without aiming at one-fourth your normal percentage, which has a curious result: The *slower* you are, the *better* snap-firing is for you, since you have more chances to hit.

Gadgets

The authors (Sherman Kahn, mostly) have written up all the items found in the Niven stories in precise detail. The technology of Niven's universe is very highly advanced; in ***Traveller*** terms, it's at least Tech Level 18 or above (in other words, right off the scale). The size, weight, cost, and manufacturer of each gadget is described, along with some of the "science" behind their operation. A very nice system for writing up batteries is presented, since all gadgets have their power use listed. (By the way, most weapons can be easily set up to have an infinite number of shots without reloading by using a fusion generator.) The way these gadgets are described should be a model for all roleplaying games that use gadgets.

Unfortunately, the authors felt it necessary to invent some gadgets of their own. Some of these are ludicrous, like the "pneumopistol," which shoots pellets of compressed air (!), or the "frictionless armor," which supposedly protects you because attacks slide off. (Sorry, guys, force is still transmitted regardless of the friction coefficient of the surface.) These gadgets don't feel right next to the other ones, but this is only a minor flaw; you can leave them out without affecting the game.

User-Friendliness

The source material provided is very well presented. John Hewitt's essays are reminiscent of Niven's writing, providing a very enjoyable read. The history of Known Space is covered thoroughly, with descriptions of the various human worlds and their cultures. Each alien race is thoroughly described, with its history, physical characteristics, skill percentages, psychology, and such all provided. Many native creatures and plants are also described. The descriptions are very thorough, so any of this material could be used in another science-fiction game with some work. The only lapses concern the Ringworld itself — there's no drawing of the Ringworld anywhere in the game! You have to read the novels or buy the ***Ringworld Companion*** to find out what the Ringworld looks like. Also, no map of Known Space is included in the game. Couldn't the Chaosium have left out a critter or two and put those things in the game?

The advice to the gamemaster on how to *run* this game is nearly nonexistent — 4 pages out of 204. You get mostly negative warnings — "don't allow players to smash and grab 'cause it's not fair" type of things. There's a tremendous amount of information provided about creatures (both sentient and nonsentient) on the Ringworld. This information, while very complete and nicely presented, seems not very worthwhile when a character wearing impact armor and carrying a flashlight laser can walk over almost any threat (despite what they say in the rules). And who cares what the native plants are like, when whatever you stuff into your autochef turns into edible food?

A Missed Bet

Really, the ***Ringworld*** universe is not an especially good roleplaying situation in the traditional sense. Most of Known Space is too civilized for true action and adventure. The Ringworld itself is "uncivilized" enough, but the technology of the explorers is so much better that they can walk right over most native threats. Think of starting out your ***D&D*** adventurers in a first level dungeon, only the adventurers are armed with +5 armor and vorpal swords. You'd quickly get bored.

However, the ***Ringworld*** game is a good simulation, because the characters in the stories *were* much more powerful than the natives. But the challenges of the Ringworld stories arose from situations that couldn't be handled with a flashlight laser or a variable sword. Those neat weapons didn't matter when the whole Ringworld was falling into its sun, as in ***Ringworld Engineers***. The characters had to solve problems with their heads, not with their gadgets.

Unfortunately, the authors of the ***Ringworld*** game miss that point entirely. They come heartbreakingly close when they include a section on Ringworld mysteries — they discuss many of the very important questions left unanswered in the books. But they fall short when they don't tell you how to *use* those mysteries to create scenarios.

Plotlines

The ***Ringworld*** campaign I'd like to run would be a "third novel" in the Ringworld series. I'd bring the characters to the Ringworld once again, with some ARM or Kzinti or Puppeteer plot behind the expedition, and then reveal some of the Ringworld mysteries (while creating more questions, of course). Then the characters have to deal with some universe-shaking problem, like the return of the Slavers or the arrival of the Protectors. Ringworld is the perfect setting for such epic plots. However, the scenario included in ***Ringworld*** (only one!) is very pedestrian — characters spend

two years getting to the Ringworld, get shot down by the meteor defense, and are stranded. The big excitement comes when they get to do a research project to find out they can't fix the hyperdrive. Ho hum.

More to the point, nowhere does the game discuss events that happened in *Ringworld* or *Ringworld Engineers*. The events in those novels have a tremendous effect on any future Ringworld expeditions, or adventures in Known Space, for that matter. Ringworld adventures that don't take those events into account don't make much sense — they feel hollow. Where's the writeup for Louis Wu or Chmee, who are still on the Ringworld and would certainly interact with the characters? What about the UN government or the Patriarchy? Wouldn't they be interested in another Ringworld expedition? These are annoying "*Ringworld* mysteries."

Consumer Report

All of these complaints can be fixed with a little work on the part of the GM. Overall, the authors have done a very good job making a roleplaying game out of *Ringworld*. The technology is suitably deadly, the background is well detailed, and the creatures are thoroughly described. The ***Ringworld*** game is definitely not for beginners, though. With a $25 price tag, it's not much of a bargain unless you're prepared to do some work, or unless you're a real Niven fan. The technology is so advanced that you really can't use it in ***Traveller*** or ***Space Opera*** or ***Star Frontiers***, but the aliens and animals presented will work well in any science fiction game with some adaptation. My recommendation: Niven fans should buy it for the essays and background materials. Roleplayers should be prepared to do some work on scenarios; but if you do, you'll have some terrific roleplaying in a beautifully detailed world. Science-fiction gamers who want to use it for source material probably won't get their money's worth.

What Niven Thinks About Ringworld

Niven himself is not an experienced roleplayer; he's seen the ***Ringworld*** game, but "some of it is too technical for me. What I understand, I like." Niven spoke with *Space Gamer* long-distance from his home in Tarzana, California.

Are there any features of the game he especially likes? "I haven't studied it — but I can see I've *been* studied. I know for about a year people [the designers] would come up to me at conventions with questions about Known Space that would take up an hour or more." And was it worth it? "I don't know. I haven't played the game. [But] the LASFS (Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society) has a group that games once a month; I gave it over to them to test, and they tell me it plays well."

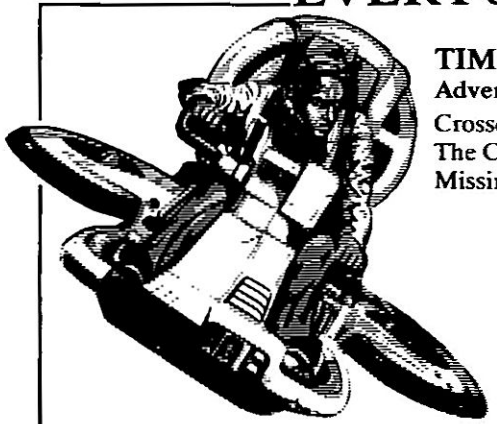
What if the Chaosium wanted to publish a ***Ringworld*** scenario giving an explanation for some Ringworld or Known Space "mystery"? Would Niven allow it? "They bought the rights, so I certainly couldn't *stop* them. Anything they guess at is their own problem." He himself, though, would not feel bound by anything a game scenario established.

This brought up the obvious question: Will Niven write any more Ringworld stories or scenarios? "To the best of my knowledge, there will be no more Ringworld books — and no ***Ringworld*** scenarios written by Larry Niven *directly*. But sometimes my subconscious plays tricks on me; who knows?" At any rate, it seems Niven isn't quite done with the Known Space universe; he's thinking of buying rights to ***Ringworld*** background author John Hewitt's essays on the Kzinti, and assigning the information to other writers to produce a series of stories on the Man/Kzin Wars. Stand by for further developments.

—The Editors

RINGWORLD (Chaosium, Inc.); $25. Designed by Jon Hewitt, Sherman Kahn, and a host of others. Four 8½" x 11" booklets, a Reference Sheet, 27 standup cardboard figures, 2 twenty-sided dice, 2 six-sided dice, 1 eight-sided die, boxed. Playing time and number of players indefinite. Published 1984.

EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT . . .



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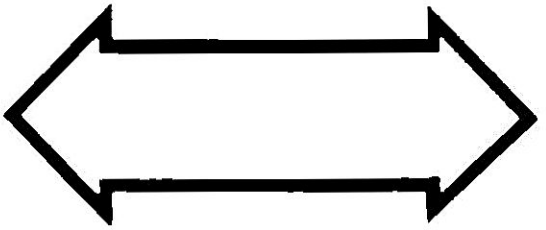
Converting *TFT* Characters To *T&T*



TOM RILEY

As one of many gamers who thought Metagaming's ***Fantasy Trip*** was the only really playable FRP system, I was pretty upset at the demise of Metagaming, and worried more than I should have about whether there would ever be any new *TFT* material. Reluctantly, I began looking at other systems. I had already tried many of them and gotten no satisfaction, and most of the ones I found on store shelves seemed no better. Then I happened on ***Tunnels & Trolls***, and realized my luck had changed.

T&T and *TFT* have an awful lot in common. Both require only ordinary, six-sided dice. Both are easier to learn than most other systems. Most importantly, both systems possess a logical framework which makes it easy to apply a simple procedure — the saving roll — to any number of tasks in the game world. *T&T* is even more free-form, however, than *TFT*: There is no need for a playing board to regulate movement; it is easier to attempt tricks and original stratagems in combat; and the monsters can be easily adjusted to the powers of the player characters. Now that I have some experience as a GM, I can accept this freedom as a positive value, and realize that in *T&T* I have found not a *TFT* substitute but a system with many unique virtues of its own.

When I first turned to *T&T*, though, I realized that my players would be more likely to try it if I allowed them to use their favorite *TFT* characters, so I had to work out a method of converting *TFT* stats to *T&T*.

At first sight, this task might seem simple: *TFT* characters have ST (Strength), DX (Dexterity, and IQ (Intelligence); why not just roll for CON (Constitution), LK (Luck), and CHR (Charisma) in order to complete their *T&T* profiles? This method did not strike me as fair. Imagine an experienced *TFT* character with ST 20 rolling a 5 for CON. In *TFT*, the character might have been used to charging recklessly at his foes, confident he could take on almost anything. But in *T&T* he would be as afraid of facing trouble as a feeble old blind beggar. Clearly, he would not be the same character.

The method I finally settled on was to base CON, LK, and CHR on the average of a 3d6 roll and one or more *TFT* attributes. Thus a character's *TFT* strengths (and weaknesses) would be carried over into *T&T*, but attributes could still diverge markedly, as they are supposed to in *T&T*. I base CON on ST because ST in *TFT* serves the same purpose CON does in *T&T*; I base LK on DX and IQ because a nimble, clever *TFT* character tends to be luckier than his or her cohorts; and I base CHR on ST and IQ on the theory that fit, witty people are more attractive than out-of-shape dullards. (Most people who say muscles are ugly — on women or on men — are just plain envious.) With a few more adjustments for race, possessions, and magic, this system achieves a fair and accurate translation from *TFT* to *T&T*.

The steps in the adaptation process are as follows:

1. Find the number of attribute points the *TFT* character has gained since entering the game by subtracting his or her beginning attribute total from the present total. From the result, subtract 2, then 3, then 4, etc., until the next subtracted number would bring the result below zero. The *last* number you subtracted is the character's *T&T* level. For example, a *TFT* human with attribute total 45 is a 4th-level character in *T&T*.

2. *TFT* ST, DX, and IQ equal *T&T* ST, DEX, and IQ respectively.

3. *T&T* CON = (*TFT* ST + 3d6)/2.
   T&T CHR = (*TFT* ST + IQ + 2(3d6))/4.
   T&T LK = (*TFT* DX + IQ + 2(3d6))/4.

4. *T&T* adjustments for non-human races are now applied if the *TFT* character belongs to one of those races. However, in any case where the ratio reduces an attribute, and where that attribute, in *TFT* terms, is less than 11, the difference between 11 and the *TFT* attribute is added to the *T&T* attribute after the ratio is applied. Likewise, in any case where the ratio increases an attribute, and where that attribute, in *TFT*, is greater than 10, the difference between the *TFT* attribute and 10 is subtracted from the *T&T* attribute after the ratio is applied. Finally, after applying these adjustments, the GM should calculate minimum attributes for the *T&T* races concerned, and make sure none of the character's attributes fall below these minima.

(*TFT* Reptile Men are treated in *T&T* as permanent were-types, except that they retain their normal DEX and can still use weapons. Friendly Reptile Men should be extremely rare in the *T&T* universe. *TFT* Prootwaddles can safely be kept out of *T&T* altogether.)

5. *T&T* characters receive AP appropriate to their level, plus any *TFT* EP they have squirreled away.

6. Possessions are translated into *T&T* as nearly as possible. A magic staff in *TFT* is equal to a *T&T* staff ordinaire. A *TFT* staff-of-power is a staff deluxe, but as yet possesses no spells its owner does not have.

There are few weapons in *TFT* that cannot be found in standard *T&T*. One exception is the boomerang, but it is not hard to come up with a *T&T* equivalent for it. In *TFT*, a boomerang requires a ST of 11 and does as much damage as a light crossbow. If the GM assumes that a boomerang is similar in effect to a light crossbow in other ways, he might decide that in *T&T* it does 4 dice damage, requires ST 11 and DEX 10, weighs and costs about as much as a baton (20 WU, 10GP), and has about the range of a javelin (40 yds.). This is just an example, and GMs may have other interpretations (especially if they are more familiar with boomerangs than I), but it should not be difficult to come up with fair assessments.

GMs may translate *TFT* magical items into *T&T* as they see fit — or simply declare that the magic in the item has worn out.

7. A wizard whose DEX or IQ, inherited from *TFT*, is too low for a wizard in *T&T* has low attributes adjusted up to the *T&T* minimum: DEX 8 and IQ 10.

Alien Worlds

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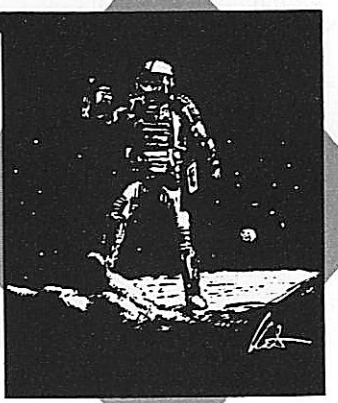

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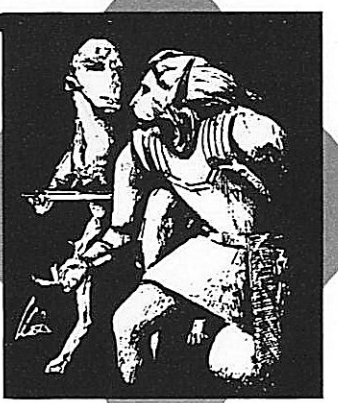

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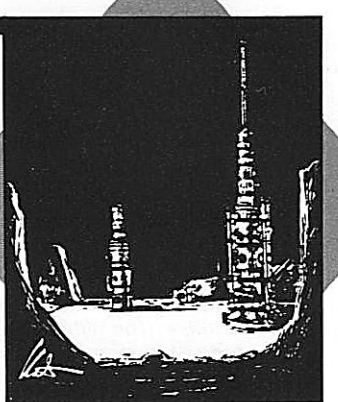

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8. If *TFT* wizards have spells similar to higher-level *T&T* spells, and if they have the DEX and IQ to cast those spells, they are awarded those spells free of charge. Likewise, any heroes with spells in *TFT* become *T&T* rogues, and get the equivalent spell they already possess *if* they have the DEX and IQ to use them. Wizards naturally inherit all the Level 1 *TFT* spells, but rogues do not.

9. *TFT* heroes without any spells must choose whether they will be warriors or rogues in *T&T*. The GM may allow qualified heroes to become warrior-wizards.

Now that the guidelines are spelled out, let's take a typical *TFT* character and see how he converts to *T&T*. Our convert is Arkebus, an Elvish Wizard.

TFT Character Record

Name: Arkebus.
Race: Elf.
Type: Wizard. EP = 52

ST 12	**Spells and Talents:**
DX 12	Human, Elvish, Literacy; Light-
IQ 14	ning, 4-Hex Illusion, Glamor,
MA 12	Curse, Sleep, Summon Bear,
	Reverse Missiles, Dazzle, Fire,
	Aid, Staff, Detect Magic

Possessions: Labyrinth Kit, 2 Rations, Staff, 2 GP, 30 SP.

Step 1: Arkebus started with 32 attribute points. He now has 38. 38 − 32 = 6. 6 − 2 = 4, 4 − 3 = 1, 1 − 4 = −3. Since subtracting 4 brought the total below zero, we disregard the 4 and go back to the 3 subtracted before. Arkebus is a 3rd level character.

Step 2: Right now, Arkebus has *TFT* ST 12, DEX 12, and IQ 14.

Step 3: Arkebus rolls 11 on 3d6, then averages this roll with his ST for a CON of 11.5. Rounded up, this gives him a CON of 12.

Arkebus rolls 3d6 again, and gets a 4. He multiplies this by 2, adds his ST and IQ, and divides by 4. Result: CHR = 8.25. Rounded up, CHR = 9.

Arkebus rolls 3d6 a third time and gets a 12. He multiplies by 2, adds DEX and IQ, and divides by 4. Result LK = 12.5, rounded up to 13.

Step 4: The *TFT* Peters-McAllister ratios for Arkebus' Elvish heritage are applied. ST = 12, IQ = 21, LK = 13, CON = 8, DEX = 18, and CHR = 18. However, because Arkebus' *TFT* IQ was already 4 points over 10, his *T&T* IQ = 21 − 4 = 17. Likewise, his DEX = 18 − 2 = 16.

Step 5: Arkebus' AP total = 3,000 (because he is level 3) + 52 = 3,052.

Step 6: In exchange for his labyrinth kit, Arkebus might be given the standard *T&T* clothes and pack. His two rations might be worth two days' provisions. His magic staff is a *T&T* staff ordinaire. And he has 2 GP and 30 SP.

Step 7: Not applicable to Arkebus.

Step 8: In addition to his Level 1 spells, Arkebus might be given *Blasting Power* (L3) for *TFT* Lightning, *Rock-A-Bye* (L3) for Sleep, *Curse You* (L2) for Curse, and *Mirage* (L2) for 4-Hex Illusion. Although he has the DEX and IQ to learn L4 spells, none of his *TFT* spells parallel them, so he doesn't get them. (And if he wants to buy them, he'll have to increase his assets considerably).

Step 9: Not applicable to Arkebus.

The final result:

T&T Character Record

Name: Arkebus. **Type:** Wizard.
Kin: Elven male. **Level:** 3rd.
ST 12 IQ 17 LK 13 CON 8
DEX 16 CHR 18 ADDS 5
Weight Possible: 1200
Weight Carried: 132
Gold: 2 GP, 30 SP. AP: 3,052
Weapons: Magic Staff (Quarter-Staff, 2D, Costs 10, weighs 50).
Armor: None.
Languages: Elvish, Common, Dwarvish, Goblin (the last two rolled randomly from the Language Table).
Magic: All L1 spells, plus Mirage (L2), Curse You (L2), Rock-A-Bye (L3), and Blasting Power (L3).
Other Possessions: Clothes and pack (10 WU), 2 days' provisions (40WU).

Arkebus' height and weight can easily be rolled up without reference to his *TFT* existence. And if his brother Arbelest, a warrior, wants to keep his *TFT* skills, they can easily be adapted into *T&T* with the skill system from ***Mercenaries, Spies, and Private Eyes***. (Any *TFT* skills without specific *MSPE* equivalents can be treated as *Special Interests*). I think Arkebus and Arbelest will enjoy their adventures in the *T&T* universe, and I believe they can carry on their careers from *TFT* with a minimum of system shock. Moreover, I do not think the two Elves will be alone in their newfound gaming pleasure. □

. . . And Adapting Them Back Again

Characters who have found and enjoyed adventures in the *T&T* universe may nonetheless not want to stay there forever. Perhaps they left friends in the world of Cidri. Perhaps they have a favorite Microquest they're dying to get back to. Or perhaps things are just getting too hot in a world of MR 270 Flame Demons. Whatever the reason, players may want to convert their characters from *T&T* back to *TFT*. (In my campaign, for instance, I am using *T&T* for PBM encounters and both *T&T* and *TFT* for face-to-face play.) The reconversion is not difficult at all.

An important difference between the two systems is that *T&T* tends toward bigger numbers. Weapons do more damage, armor stops more hits, magic costs more ST, and, once characters have begun to advance, attributes increase to much higher levels. ST 60 characters are quite common in *T&T*; in *TFT*, the suggested natural lid on the ST of human characters (30 pts.) is rarely needed, for few characters even get that strong. (The *T&T* character will need this extra ST, and it can be argued that ST 60 in *T&T* is actually equivalent to, say, ST 25 in *TFT*). The point is that, once a character reaches the higher levels of *T&T* experience, high attributes cannot be transposed unchanged into *TFT*.

The fair thing to do is to keep a copy of your *TFT* character sheet once you have finished translating into *T&T*. Every time your *T&T* character goes up a level, add one attribute point to his or her somnolent *TFT* counterpart. If *T&T* level bonuses go to ST, DEX, or IQ, add the point to the corresponding *TFT* attribute; if to CON, add to *TFT* ST. If to LK, add either to *TFT* DX or IQ (player's choice); if to CHR, add either to ST or IQ (again, player's choice). The basic rule is that after some time in the *T&T* world, one *T&T* character level equals one *TFT* attribute point — a conversion factor which allows a fair balance between systems. (And if you choose the *T&T* option which allows you to add to ST *and* CON, be careful to add only one point to your *TFT* ST.)

Conversion of property, spells, and skills from *T&T* to *TFT* requires the old gamer's standby, common sense. Just reverse the guidelines in the main article. *T&T* Adventure Points and *TFT* Experience Points may be considered roughly equivalent, so points gained in a quick adventure in one system may benefit the character in the other system.

So be the first warrior on your continent to go through both ***Deathtrap Equalizer*** and ***Death Test***. And don't be surprised when the innkeeper says: "There's something strange about you, traveller."

—Tom Riley

RIDING THE SHOCKWAVE

ANALYSIS AND STRATEGY

BY PHILIP RENNERT

Steve Jackson's long-awaited expansion set for *Ogre/G.E.V.* has been published. It's called ***Shockwave***, and it includes a bunch of new units and scenarios (also a new map which fits on any side of the *G.E.V.* map). The new units introduced are the cruise missile, which comes on a missile crawler (MSL CRWLR), the laser and laser tower, the light GEV (LGEV), the GEV personnel carrier (GEV-PC), the super-heavy tank (SUPERHVY), and marine infantry. There are also trucks and hovertrucks, but these are unarmed and tend to be targets only. I'd like to discuss how these new units interact with each other and the older units, and offer some strategy suggestions for the new scenarios. (*And I'll be making a few comments on Phil's ideas here and there — Steve Jackson.*)

NEW UNITS

The first and most devastating of the new units is the *cruise missile*. They carry fairly large nukes: They're what made the craters on the *Ogre* map. When a cruise missile goes off, everything in its hex is destroyed, and a shockwave is generated which attacks units up to 5 hexes away, depending on unit type.

It's easy to see that cruise missiles are death on everything, and especially on hovercraft. However, there is a defense: You can shoot down the cruise missile before it gets to you. When a cruise missile is launched, everything stops while the missile is moved, a hex at a time. If the missile passes within range of defending units, each unit gets one free shot at it. The odds aren't very good, but if the missile has travelled far, it's easier to track and hit. If a cruise missile is hit, it's destroyed, but it has a ⅙ chance of exploding in the hex where it was shot down.

Some things can be seen from this:

1) Cruise missiles can be used in two ways: Fly into the target's hex and obliterate him for sure (if you make it), or detonate just outside his range and kill him with the shockwave. The first method will appeal to gamblers: The odds will often be that your expensive cruise missile will be shot down, but if you make it, you can wreak great havoc. The second method is more conservative: There's no risk, but the damage will be less against anything except hovercraft; GEVs are exceptionally susceptible to destruction by shockwave. It's clear that nail-biting decisions will be made about whether to detonate now or go for one more hex. Cruise missiles introduce a not entirely welcome element of "the whole game on one big roll" (actually a lot of low-odd rolls) into *Ogre/G.E.V.*, which has remained relatively free of this until now.

2) The distance a cruise missile flies is extremely important. Infantry, for instance, is twice as likely to shoot down a cruise missile which has flown 11 hexes as one which has flown 10. A laser tower will destroy 72% of off-board cruise missiles the instant they enter the map. If you plan to attack with the shockwave, it doesn't matter, but if you're going to give anyone a shot at your expensive cruise missile, you must make every effort to launch it from within 10 hexes of the target.

3) Infantry has found a new purpose in life: shooting down cruise missiles. For the price, nothing is as good at it as infantry. Every big, expensive unit needs an infantry screen around it to help protect it from missiles.

4) For reference purposes, to have a 50% chance of stopping a cruise missile you need:

- 8 squads of infantry or large armor units
- A laser and 4 INF
- If the missile has gone more than 10 hexes, 3 INF, or a laser and 1 INF.

An intact Mark III Ogre has a 79% chance of stopping a close-range cruise missile; this drops to 60% if the Ogre's missiles have been fired. For a Mark V, these figures are 97% and 77%. To turn this around, a close-range cruise missile has a 40% chance of destroying an otherwise intact missile-less Mark III Ogre (23% for a Mark V) if no other units are around to help the Ogre. A few squads of infantry or some nearby armor can be a big help here.

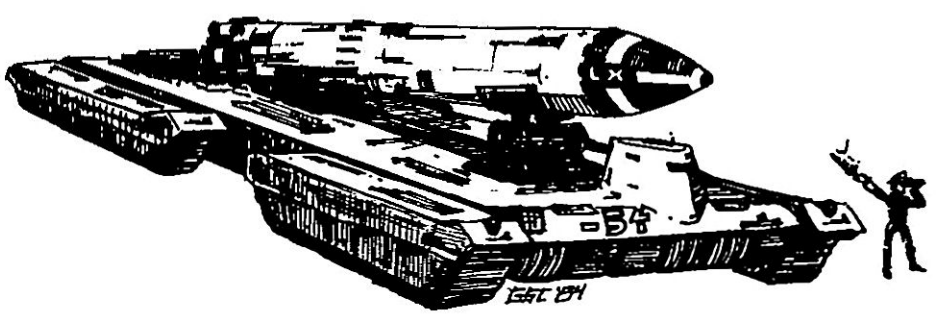
5) The shockwave/range ratings (i.e., how strong an attack a cruise missile can make without coming into range of the unit) of various units:

- All GEVs 4-1
- Lt Tank 2-1
- Inf 2-1
- Hvy Tank 1-1

Other units can't be shockwaved from outside their range.

Cruise missiles are expensive. For the price of three armor units, you get a missile crawler (defense 2, movement 1) carrying a single cruise missile. When the missile is fired, what remains is an unarmed crawler (movement goes up to 2) which you then try to evacuate off your board edge, since the enemy counts one armor unit (6 victory points) if he destroys it. This strongly implies that the value of a cruise missile is two armor units (12 victory points). I'd like to suggest a rule clarification: It should be explicitly stated that whenever you launch a cruise missile, your opponent gets 12 victory points. (*Yes — SJ*). Therefore you must be sure to get your money's worth from a cruise missile.

To shoot down cruise missiles, we have *lasers* and *laser towers*. With the introduction of lasers, *Ogre/G.E.V.* has losts its innocence as far as lines of sight go: Lasers are straight-line weapons with infinite range (well, 30 hexes) which are blocked by any raised terrain



MISSILE CRAWLER

(towns, woods, swamps, rubble). Since the *Shockwave* map is somewhat more obstructed than the *G.E.V.* map (it resembles the north half of the *G.E.V.* map), lasers (which are immobile) must be placed with great care to get good use out of them. Laser towers are tall enough to shoot over raised terrain, so they avoid the line-of-sight problem, but neither lasers nor laser towers can shoot at a unit in raised terrain (exception: laser towers can shoot at cruise missiles in raised terrain). Lasers and laser towers don't have defense strengths; they are buildings. Rules for shooting up buildings are introduced in *Shockwave*.

The main purpose of lasers and laser towers is to shoot down cruise missiles, which they do well (in fact, they can intercept *Ogre* missiles on a 9 or more on two dice). (Rules question: Can a laser intercept an Ogre missile fired at a cruise missile?) (*Yes. — SJ*) However, they can also shoot at other units, with an attack strength of 2; this can be quite effective against expensive, poorly-armored units (MSL CRAWLER, HWTZR, MHWZ).

The *light GEV* is effectively half a GEV, at half the price. This can be useful: An LGEV is as good at shooting cruise missiles or bridges as a GEV, and relatively *more* efficient at shooting up town hexes. They can be a cheaper way of getting a GEV's job done.

The *GEV personnel carrier* gives infantry another new role: mounted attack. A GEV-PC carrying 3 squads can advance 3 hexes, attack an adjacent unit with a strength of 4 (3 INF plus its own 1), then either run away 2 hexes with the infantry, or dump the infantry out to receive the return fire and run away by itself. The speed of the GEV-PC makes it much easier to get infantry into the action.

This brings up an apparent flaw with *G.E.V.* rule 5.11 about infantry riding tanks (and GEV-PCs). This rule describes how to shoot at infantry mounted on a carrier unit, but 5.111 says that infantry can freely mount at the beginning of a turn and dismount at the end: That way (unless someone mistakenly takes mounted infantry into an overrun), the other side *never* gets a chance to shoot at infantry while mounted! The infantry spends its own turn mounted and the other side's turn (when it gets shot at) dismounted, getting the benefit of riding without the cost.

Therefore, I'd like to propose a rule change (to be *G.E.V.* **rule 5.112**): If a player can fire into a hex containing enemy infantry and carrier units, he may ask if the infantry plans to ride in the coming turn. If the defender says yes, he must mount up the infantry immediately and take fire while mounted. If he says no, that infantry cannot ride in the coming turn. (*Clunky, but reasonable — and yes, it does close the loophole. — SJ*)

It's clear that taking mounted infantry into an overrun attack is usually a mistake, since one die roll is applied to the carrier and each squad, and can easily destroy them all. However, I'd like to propose an optional rule about this:

Optional *G.E.V.* rule 5.113: Panzerblitz (or hoverblitz) attacks. Infantry which rides a carrier unit into an overrun attack may choose to dismount after entering the overrun hex but before taking fire. (Since the approximate enemy position is known, this represents dropping off and fanning out just before reaching it.) In this case, each squad and the carrier are separate targets, as though the infantry had entered the hex unmounted. After the combat, surviving infantry may not remount or continue to move, but the carrier (if it survives) may continue to move if it has movement remaining.

This optional rule definitely increases the effectiveness of infantry: With it, three squads on a GEV-PC are odds-on to kill any armor unit but a SUPERHVY in an overrun, and they can make such an attack up to 5 hexes away!

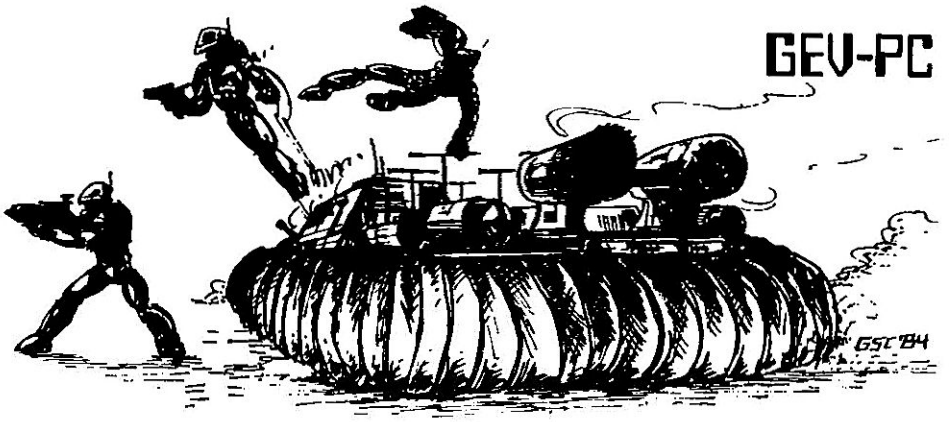
(Incidentally, the point value of a GEV-PC when destroyed is given as 6. Is this a typo; should it be 3?) (*Yes. Sorry. — SJ*)

The *superheavy tank* has two guns, each with attack 3, which can fire on different targets. One hit still destroys the whole tank. According to my calculations, a pair of HVY TANKs dueling a SUPERHVY will win 60% of the time even if the SUPERHVY fires first. (*How do you figure that? My calculations don't agree with yours. I'll address the question in a future designer's article. — SJ*) Therefore it's hard to imagine when I'd rather have a SUPERHVY than two HVYs. SUPERHVYs do have the advantage of greater attack range; they can attack from 6 hexes away, and they can't be shockwaved from outside their range. However, I doubt this outweighs the disadvantage of being a single expensive target.

Finally, *marine infantry* are just like regular infantry, except they treat water hexes as clear terrain. Their cost is high (trade 2 regular infantry squads for each marine squad), but they can be useful in certain applications.

I'd like to propose a rule which seems to follow but wasn't stated:

***Shockwave* rule 3.0161:** Marines and INF stacked together can be grouped together in groups of up to three squads for defensive purposes. (Example: two marines and an INF in a town hex could be treated by the defender as a single defense strength of 9.) If the attacker rolls a "D" against such a group, roll again to see which squad died (in this example, one of the marines dies on a 1-4 and the INF on 5 or 6). (*Yes. — SJ*)



UNIT ANALYSIS

Now I'd like to summarize the good and bad points of these units, make some unit choice recommendations, and suggest how to use, and oppose, these units. What I have in mind here is a *Ceasefire Collapse*-type meeting engagement, but this also applies to other situations.

Cruise Missile (Missile Crawler)

Good points: destructiveness!

Bad points: cost, vulnerability

Recommendations: This is tricky: If the other guy doesn't have a laser tower, or if his force is mostly hovercraft, I'd recommend taking some; otherwise, not.

What to do with yours: If he doesn't have a laser tower, keep at least one in reserve. This is a case where the threat can be more powerful than the execution. The existence of a cruise missile will force him to keep his units screened by infantry, avoid stacking, and generally use his force in a less than optimum fashion. If he has missile crawlers, it may be worth taking his out with yours if you can: You'll probably get some other units into the bargain. If he has a group of hovercraft, attack them via shockwave; otherwise weigh the odds in deciding whether to risk a direct attack or attack with the shockwave. If you plan to attack directly, be sure to do it from 10 hexes or less away. Keep your crawlers well screened by infantry and armor if the other side has cruise missiles.

If he has a laser tower, launch your missiles right away unless you can get your crawlers into raised terrain immediately. The risk of the laser tower killing your crawlers is too great. Since your crawlers will never survive to reach close range, attack by shockwave when you see a good chance (hovercraft are the best targets). Remember, your missiles can be shot down right after launch: Don't fly them over your troops if possible (I've seen someone fly a cruise missile over his Mark V Ogre, have it shot down in that hex, and roll a six . . .). Remember to evacuate your crawlers quickly after firing.

If you have off-board cruise missiles, attack by shockwave only (the chance of getting shot down is too great).

What to do about the other guy's: Clump your units in a tight defensive formation (avoid stacking), well screened by infantry. A line of INF, backed by a line of HVYs, backed by a

line of MSLs makes a good missile defense. Spread out your big targets (crawlers, HWTZRs & MHWZs, SUPERHVY); keep your Ogres protected by infantry. Try sending some hovercraft after his crawlers, but keep them spread out. It may be possible to take out his crawlers with cruise missiles. If his units get close, it can be advantageous to rush and intermingle your units: Shockwaves don't respect nationality.

Laser, laser tower

Good points: range, effectiveness against missiles

Bad points: blockage by terrain, immobility

Recommendations: If you have a choice (you do, in some scenarios), take a laser tower rather than two or three lasers: The ability to shoot over terrain is worth it.

What to do with yours: The best possible target is a missile crawler; then come HWTZRs and MHWZs; shoot them if you can. Keep your lasers screened by infantry if the other side has cruise missiles. Wait until the last minute to shoot his cruise missiles (bonuses to the roll) unless you have a golden opportunity to shoot the missile down over his own troops and you feel lucky. If none of the above happen, just keep taking your two-attack-factor shots.

What to do about the other guy's: If possible, blast them with cruise missiles. Otherwise, an advance with a bunch of armor units will eventually get to them. Keep your units in raised terrain. If they're lasers (not towers), just stay out of their line of sight. A rear area raid by a bunch of hovercraft can take out a laser tower, but expect to lose maybe one GEV per turn to the tower's fire. If you think you can get his lasers with armor units, hold back your cruise missiles until you do (they're more likely to reach their targets when the lasers are gone). Remember, laser fire doesn't spill over; if only lasers can reach you, you can stack units.

Light GEV

Good points: cost, speed

Bad points: attack, defense strength, sensitivity to terrain

Recommendations: If you're going to take GEVs, trade in one or two for LGEVs.

What to do with yours: Keep them on the fringes of the battle or use them to raid the enemy's rear. They're good for destroying bridges and towns, and for anti-missile screens. They can pick away at the infantry screens around the enemy's big targets, and not be worth his while to chase. If well-handled, they can tie down more than their cost's worth of enemy units.

What to do about the other guy's: LT TANKs are probably the best (cheapest) units for keeping them at bay. A LT will usually beat an LGEV in a duel, even if the LGEV fires first. In general, don't fire at an LGEV if there's a better target around.

GEV Personnel Carrier

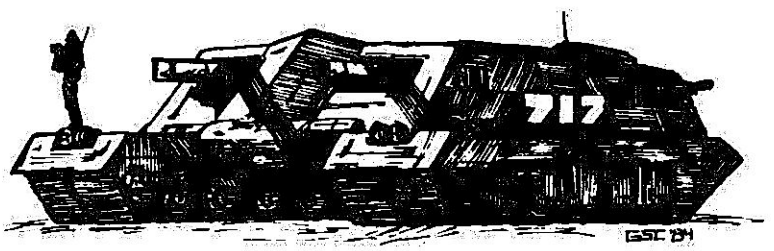
Good points: carrying capacity, speed

Bad points: attack, defense strength, sensitivity to terrain

Recommendations: Choose a few pairs — they're a good way to get your infantry into the fight.

What to do with yours: Their job is to drop infantry in dangerous places and get away. One problem is that the hexes infantry likes (towns, woods) aren't hexes GEVs can get back out of: Drop in town/road or woods/road hexes if possible. Mounted attack can be quite effective, and you can always dismount afterward if it doesn't work. Keep the GEV-PCs nearby to pick up survivors after the combat. Be careful with GEV-PCs while loaded: They make big targets. If their infantry is lost, use them as slow LGEVs.

What to do about the other guy's: Shoot them whenever you can: They count for 9 victory points if you kill them and their loads. Cruise missiles are great against them, as against any hovercraft. Their mounted attack range is only 4 (move 3 + infantry range 1), so all units but infantry can usually stay away from them or get the first shot in.



SUPERHEAVY TANK

Superheavy tank

Good points: attack strength, two guns, defense strength

Bad points: cost

Recommendations: Don't choose any; take two HVYs instead.

What to do with yours: They're simultaneously big, powerful armor units and expensive targets: It's hard to both send them into the thick of things and be careful with them. Try to get off the first shot(s) with them. If possible, send them against MSL TANKs (which attack at only 1-2) or maybe HWTZRs (which attack at 1-1). They can shoot at HVYs from behind an infantry line two hexes in front of them. They belong in the forefront of your armor line, though they won't last very long.

What to do about the other guy's: Shoot them first, ahead of all other armor units; kill two guns with one X. A HVY's 4 attack factor is just right for killing them (1-1 attack), or use a pair of GEVs or LTs. If you have twice their number of HVYs, rush them: You can give them the first shot and still usually win.

Marine Infantry

Good points: They work in water.

Bad points: cost

Recommendations: Take a few if an infantry screen around a big unit needs to include a water hex.

What to do with yours: Use them for screening in water hexes. In the ***G.E.V. Raid*** scenario, for example, I like to put a HWTZR in the city hex that sticks out into the lake (2113). To keep the GEVs off, I need a screen two hexes away; a squad of marines can cover hex 1914 more cheaply than a GEV. A couple of squads in city hex 1915 can make the GEVs keep their distance even on the other side of the river. However, infantry is supposed to be cheap and expendable: Expensive infantry draws too many shots and dies too quickly. If your marines survive their water screening duty, keep them back out of the battle (and in a town hex) if you can.

What to do about the other guy's: Shoot them first, ahead of other infantry: They count 4 victory points per squad. Remember that they cross water hexes with only one movement point when you're counting to see what can get you. If there are no marine reinforcements nearby, it may be possible to shoot the marines on the water hex and go through the hole in the screen next turn. If there are other marines around, shoot them too, then do the same thing.

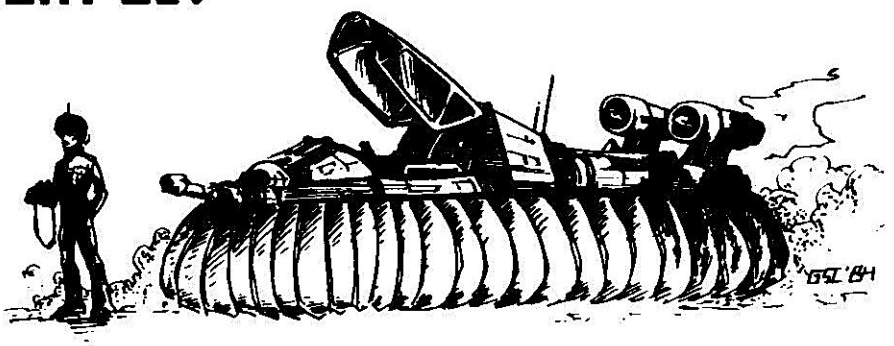
SCENARIO STRATEGY

Shockwave introduces a number of new scenarios; I'd like to make some strategy suggestions for them. I assume here that the optional rules for destruction of towns, bridges, etc. are in effect.

The Day Before is ***Ogre*** with cruise missiles. On the ***Ogre*** map, the defense gets 25 armor units, 40 infantry, and a laser tower; the attacker gets a Mark V Ogre and 20 off-board cruise missiles (of which only about 6 should make it past the first hex).

The defense should use all those extra infantry to form anti-missile lines across the board. Put the CP and the laser tower back in the corner, put a couple of HWTZRs 5 hexes in front of it, then put a line of single INF squads across the board 4 hexes in front of the HWTZRs, and another one 6 hexes in front. There should be enough left for a final line among the HWTZRs 5 hexes from the CP; a couple of pairs of LT TANKs spaced 5 hexes apart in front of all that makes a cheap first

LIGHT GEV



line. This will pretty well keep the cruise missiles off the CP: The attacker should run out of missiles well before he can chew through all that. The rest of the armor should be a mix of HVYs and MSLs, to stop the Ogre; as the attacker uses up his cruise missiles, line infantry can be freed to go die under the Ogre. The anti-Ogre armor line should mix HVYs and MSLs: The greater range of the MSLs makes it harder to attack by shockwave.

Faced with this, the attacker shouldn't waste missiles trying to get through to the CP, but should try to shockwave the armor facing the Ogre. Plan your move carefully, or you may end up with the Ogre right next to where you'd like to drop a missile. Ogre missiles can take out a couple of defending MSL TANKs to clear a path for the cruise missiles (remember, though, that a couple of the Ogre missiles will probably be shot down by the laser tower). Fire the cruise missiles gradually: This keeps the infantry occupied in missile defense, and one missile per turn keeps the laser tower from shooting at the Ogre.

This is a good, tense, fairly balanced scenario; a lot will depend on how lucky the attacker gets with his missiles.

Recon in Force is an expanded version of the *G.E.V. Raid* scenario. The ***Shockwave*** map is north of the *G.E.V.* map, and it contains the targets (everything on the *G.E.V.* map is already destroyed); in addition to towns, etc., there are 20 trucks and hovertrucks which need to make wake-up rolls before they can run. Twenty GEVs (the attacker can trade some for pairs of LGEVs) and 10 GEV-PCs full of infantry come in on the south edge of the *G.E.V.* map. The defender gets 8 armor units and 15 infantry on the *G.E.V.* map and 4 and 20 infantry on the ***Shockwave*** map, plus the usual *G.E.V. Raid* reinforcements (entering on the ***Shockwave*** map) starting on turn 4. The defender should take the maximum possible number of MSL CRWLRs, 3 (for the rest, LT TANKs or GEV-PCs for his infantry). The threat of cruise missiles will keep the GEVs from stacking, spread them out, and slow them down, and the missiles themselves when they come will wipe out most of the attacking force. The big confrontation, which will probably occur in the approaches to the big city on the ***Shockwave*** map, may well involve only a handful of units on each side: ragtag reinforcements vs. what's left of the GEVs.

An interesting scenario, and very bloody: a good example of what cruise missiles can do to hovercraft.

Casey Joneski is a new train scenario. The ***Shockwave*** map is east of the *G.E.V.* map: Casey's train must cross the *G.E.V.* map from west to east, then turn south on the ***Shockwave*** map and reach the terminal in city S-0413 (an extension to the east of the big city on the *G.E.V.* map). The defense gets 14 armor units and 20 infantry, plus 5 lasers or 2 lasers and a laser tower (I prefer the tower); the attackers, with 15 armor, enter the south edge of the *G.E.V.* map. The defense wins if the train reaches S-0413 and survives, the attackers win if they kill the train and exit 15 strength points; otherwise (the most likely result) it's a draw.

The defense should set up a strong force, mostly HVYs, in the big city, with infantry in the woods to the south (on the ***Shockwave*** map). If the attackers choose 15 non-missile units and attack the city directly, they'll get creamed. If they choose 15 GEVs and try to flank the city to the east or west, they won't make it: HVYs with a road and a shorter distance to travel can stay between them and S-0413 (the defense should put 1 INF on 1508 and S-1615 to destroy the roads in 1508, 1408, S-1615, and S-1515). They can't catch the train if it moves at full speed, without getting within range of too many defenders.

That leaves choosing mostly MSL CRWLRs, firing them all on the first turn before the tower gets them, and turning the game into an uninteresting crapshoot. If the cruise missiles can destroy even one hex of track, the train can't reach S-0413 and the game becomes a draw. (The best place to destroy railroad track is in town/RR hexes: Town hexes can be destroyed from as far away as 6 hexes, and the falling buildings destroy the track.) If the cruise missiles get the train itself — which means waiting until at least turn 2 and probably losing one or more crawlers to the tower — or the first track hex the train must enter on — which should be so well guarded by infantry that it would be a mistake to shoot at it — they might win. There's no way the defenders can provide an adequate defense for that long stretch of track against 3-5 cruise missiles (a good way to try, though, is a MSL TANK every 9 hexes) and still have enough armor to keep 15 HVYs from getting through and destroying hex S-0413. So all they can do is provide an inadequate defense, hope to get lucky, and probably get a draw. My suggestions for lasers are S-0117 and S-0708 (and the tower in, say, S-0903).

Anyone who brings something as archaic as a train anywhere near cruise missiles shouldn't expect to see it get through anyway.

"Nuts!", a scenario which takes place on the ***Shockwave*** map, is supposed to be a Bastogne-like breakout of a surrounded force. The fact that the attackers are spread out around a 15-hex-diameter circle and the advantage of the first move are supposed to compensate the defender for the short end of the 35-20 odds in armor units. Unfortunately, the defenders have an administration building so valuable that if they escape intact but lose the building, they lose. Therefore the attackers have no reason to prevent the defenders from escaping, so instead of spreading out around the circle, they concentrate everything in one place, make a standard line assault, and grind up the defenders with greater numbers. This scenario needs a change in victory conditions: I suggest removing the building, which lets the defenders run, and letting them escape from the east and south edges as well as the north, which forces the attacker to spread his forces out.

Super CP is not really a new-units scenario: It's a *large* game of ***Ogre***, where the defender gets 30 armor, 40 infantry and two Mark III Ogres, against the attacker's two Mark Vs. The CP is a building with strength 60, which takes some grinding (or a good overrun) to destroy. Have fun!

CONCLUSION

To summarize, ***Shockwave*** is what we've all been waiting for: an innovative, interesting expansion of ***Ogre/G.E.V.***. The game with cruise missiles and lasers around is sharper and more exciting (no more complacency when you're out of range — you're *never* out of range), if a bit more luck-dependent. I'd like to extend to all concerned my congratulations on a job well done, and I look forward to a lot of fun. □

SHOCKWAVE ERRATA

3.05. The victory point value for a GEV-PC should be 3. A Cruise Missile has a VP value of 12 — that is, you lose 12 VP for expending a Cruise Missile.

3.015. In ***Ogre***, when a Superheavy Tank is rammed by an Ogre, that Ogre loses 3 *tread units*.

3.016 (addition). Marines and regular infantry can combine in groups of up to 3 squads for defensive purposes. Example: Two Marine squads and a regular infantry squad would have a combined defensive strength of 3 in a clear hex, 6 in woods, or 9 in a town. If an attacker gets a "D" result against such a stack, roll randomly to see which squad is lost.

8.021. In the ***"NUTS!"*** scenario, the defender's building should be a SP 60 strongpoint.

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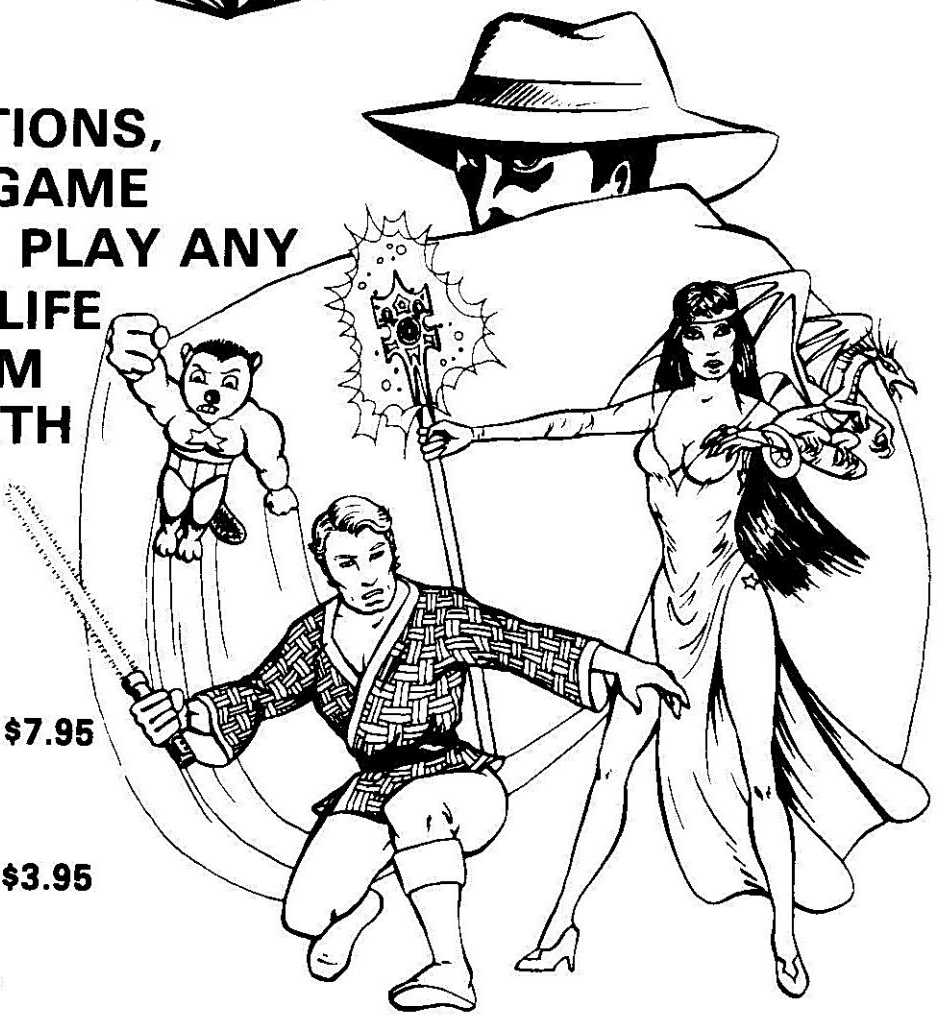

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Tékumel

In 1975 TSR, a small Wisconsin company that was beginning to gain some success with its new game ***Dungeons & Dragons****, published Professor M.A.R. Barker's roleplaying game* ***Empire of the Petal Throne****. Due perhaps to its high price — twenty-five dollars! —* ***EPT*** *enjoyed only limited success. But its setting, the exotic world of Tekumel, attracted a devoted, almost cult-like following.*

Tekumel is unique in gaming — and perhaps in literature too. Like Tolkien's Middle-earth and Austin Tappan Wright's Islandia, it is an exhaustively-developed fantasy world, with a lengthy history, many strange cultures thoroughly described, a pantheon of weird gods, and its own language. Unlike its predecessors, though, Tekumel is a true game background; as such, its history continues to develop, in an ongoing collaborative effort by all ***EPT*** *players.*

This year we've seen a resurgence of interest in Tekumel, spurred by the publication of Prof. Barker's first novel, ***The Man of Gold*** *(DAW Books, 1984), and a completely revised and expanded version of* ***EPT*** *—* ***Swords & Glory*** *(Gamescience). In this issue of* ***Space Gamer*** *we spotlight Tekumel, with a featured review of* ***Swords & Glory*** *(page 17), an interview with Prof. Barker (page 20), and a special capsule review section covering nearly every Tekumel product currently available — including* ***The Man of Gold****.*

Thanks to Frederick Paul Kiesche III, longtime ***SG*** *reviewer and author of the bulk of this material. His efforts made this section possible.*

—The Editors

The Best of All Possible Worlds

To understand the roleplaying game ***Swords & Glory***, you must know something of the history and background of the planet Tekumel.

That history begins some sixty thousand years in the future, when mankind and his alien allies — the Pe Choi, the Pachi Lei, the Shen, the Ahoggya, and others — settled Tekumel, a planet both larger and hotter than Earth. The planet's orbit was shifted, and great gravity engines were installed to bring to surface gravity in line with Earth's. Air, water, and plant life were altered, and Tekumel became a garden spot.

All was not well, however. Unknown to those who now called the planet home, enemies of mankind came to Tekumel — the Shunned Ones, the Hokun, the Mihalli, and others. And Tekumel's native species — the insectoid Ssu and scorpion-like Hluss — proved hostile and had to be driven onto reservations. There they were carefully watched. There they waited for an opportunity to avenge themselves.

Then came the Time of Darkness, when the universe "collapsed." Tekumel fell out of our universe and into its own "pocket" universe. Cities fell; continents were shattered; civilization collapsed in the midst of a catastrophe as great as any in mankind's history. Man, his allies, and his enemies fell back into barbarism.

Over a hundred centuries passed, until the time of ***Swords & Glory***. During that time, many things came to pass. The Hluss and the Ssu escaped from their reservations and engaged in many battles with man and his allies. The races of Tekumel began a long, slow climb back up to a social and technological level resembling that of Earth during the Middle Ages. During that time, empires rose and fell, culminating in the Second Imperium of Tsolyanu and the other "modern" empires — Yan Kor, Mihalli, Mu'ugalavya, Salarvya, and Livyanu, among others. Technology took on the appearance of magic as those who understood it died off and people no longer knew how to operate or maintain the devices from before the Time of Darkness.

Aliens — Friends, Enemies, and Others

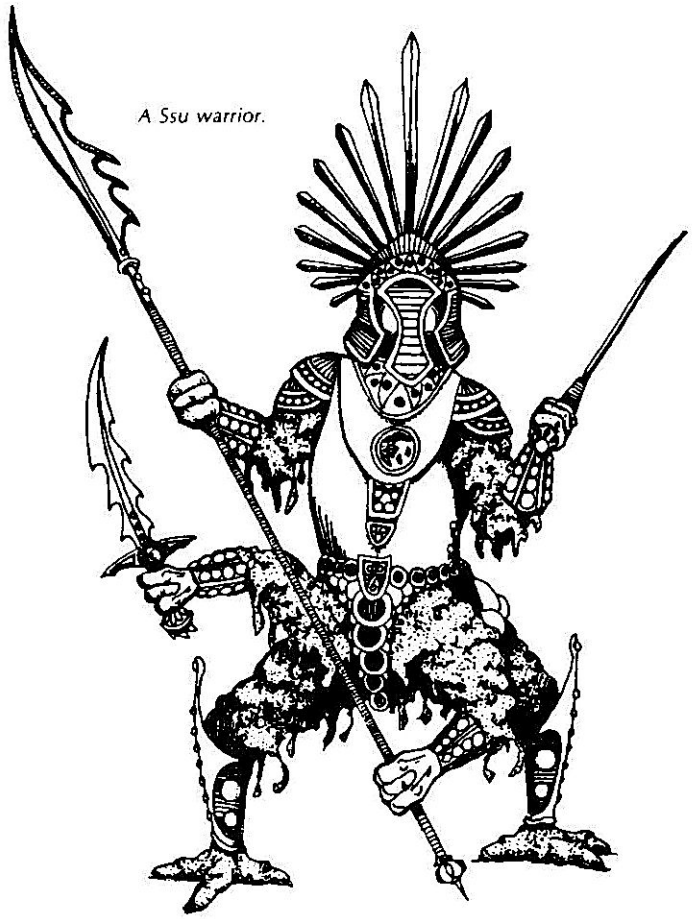
Tekumel is a veritable smorgasbord of alien races. Some of these races are friendly to man (like the Pe Choi), some are indifferent (like the Nyagga), and some are bitterly hostile (like the Ssu and Hluss). Among the races coexisting on Tekumel:

The Ahoggya: These strange beings have four arms, four legs, and barrel-shaped bodies. They also have four sets of eyes. Below three sets of eyes are various organs; beneath the fourth set is a mouth. Ahoggya walk in a permanent crouch. They are good fighters.

The Hlaka: These are slender, light-boned flyers with leathery wings and short, grey or brown fur. They have three eyes on a flattened humanoid head. The Hlaka are excellent flyers and are often used as aerial scouts or "bombers." They are, however, skittish and likely to fly off in the heat of the battle.

The Hluss: The Hluss are native to Tekumel. They have chitinous exoskeletons and resemble Terran scorpions. They are highly intelligent and fierce fighters. A Hluss warrior is a terrible sight to behold.

The Pe Choi: Members of this slender and graceful race resemble Earth's praying mantis or sea horse. Although they are most comfortable in forests, they have adapted quite well to human society, often serving in the military or priesthood. Pe Choi are intelligent and friendly, but make fierce enemies.



A Ssu warrior.

The Ssu: These vaguely insectoid creatures are also natives of Tekumel — masters of the land masses before humans arrived. Their skin looks loose and tattered. They give off a cinnamon smell. The Ssu speak in a chiming voice, and are very intelligent, fierce warriors and great sorcerers.

Religion and Magic

There are no atheists on Tekumel. Shortly after the Time of Darkness, the inhabitants of Tekumel made contact with extra-dimensional beings of great power. These beings proved so powerful they were, for all intents and purposes, indistinguishable from gods. In the years since they first made themselves known, elaborate rituals have been created and temples built to support and perpetuate the worship of these gods.

The "gods" of Tekumel generally fall into one of two categories: There are "Tlomitlanyal" (or "Lords of Stability") and "Tlokiriqaluyal" (or "Lords of Change"). In addition, both types have their cohorts, or "Hlimekluyal." Neither group can be considered "good" or "evil" per se — there is nothing so black and white on Tekumel. The two groups simply represent differing perspectives and viewpoints.

Among the Tlomitlanyal are Hnalla (The Supreme Principle of Stability), Karakan (Lord of War), and Avanthe (Mistress of Heaven). Among the Tlokiriqaluyal are Ksarul (The Doomed Prince of the Blue Room), Sarku (The Five-Headed Lord of Worms), and Dlamelish (The Green-Eyed Lady of Fleshy Joys). The Hlimekluyal of the Lords of Stability and Change include Drathe the Uncaring, Chegarra the Hero-King, Dininala the Lovely Maiden of the Turquoise Crown, Grugamu the Knower of Spells, Durritlamish the Black Angel of the Putrescent Hand, and Hrihayal the Mistress of the Thirty-Two Unspeakable Acts.

Magic plays a large part in the daily life of Tekumel. There are ancient technological devices which seem like magic to most people. In addition, there is a whole range of spells — healing spells, killing spells, spells peculiar to certain temples or religions — powered by extra-dimensional energies from the "Planes Beyond." Finally, miracles — favors granted by the gods — actually happen on Tekumel.

Technology

Tekumel is frozen at a medieval social and technological level. There are some primitive machines, but Tekumel is a tradition-choked world, and advances in science are generally stifled. Military technology is fairly advanced — bows, crossbows, catapults, and giant siege machines are all available.

Underground, Aboveground

Tekumel is a great place to go prospecting for old relics. Entire empires and cities were buried during the Time of Darkness. In addition, many societies of Tekumel take part in the custom known as "Ditlana" (or "The Renewing"). This custom dictates that cities be razed, buried, and rebuilt every 500 years or so. Those who can't bear to give up their old buildings take part in the building of vast underground labyrinths, in which portions of the razed cities are preserved. Finally, many of the tombs on Tekumel contain many rooms and passageways, strange guardians, and fabulous treasure. Tekumel is a great place for "dungeon" adventures.

Aboveground, the land is quite varied. There are swamps and deserts, mountains and plains, rivers and forests. Many areas are underpopulated or not populated at all, and most of Tekumel's land surface is unexplored.

Social Structure

Tekumel's societies are quite complex. Tsolyanu is ruled by a strong monarch — The Emperor of the Petal Throne — who spends his life in seclusion, guarded and served by the deaf and dumb members of the Omnipotent Azure Legion. Tsolyanu society places great emphasis on tradition and visible displays of power and social differences. Tsolyanu society has four major power blocs — The Imperial, Royalist, Priestly, and Military parties — all trying to win the favor of the Emperor.

In addition to Tsolyanu, there are four other societies in existence on Tekumel. Yan Kor, formerly a squabbling nation of city states, is united under Baron Ald in an ongoing war against Tsolyanu. Ald has risen to a position of great power in Yan Kor despite the fact that Yan Kor is a matriarchal nation — power rests with the women, and inheritance is passed from mother to daughter.

In Livyanu, yet another of Tekumel's societies, government is handled by the temples. The temples have taken charge of all aspects of military, social, and religious affairs. Details of this society are shrouded in secrecy; foreigners are not invited to observe. The Livyani decorate themselves with intricate tattoos, which indicate rank, clan status, and other aspects of the society.

In general, all inhabitants of Tekumel are governed by a strict sense of custom and tradition. Elaborate clan structures combine elements of extended families, schools, and trade unions or guilds. Each country has its own customs concerning marriage, the status of women or men, burial, eating, and drinking. These customs are as varied as one would find on our own planet.

Conclusion

Tekumel is a varied world. If you like to run overland adventures, there are plenty of places to explore — $^{1}\!/_{4}$ of the planet's surface is unexplored. If you prefer underground explorations, treasure grabbing, and dungeon crawling, the complex and varied Underworlds of Tekumel are sure to please you. If you like complex social situations, political intrigues, or religious mysticism, this is the place for you. Truly, the best of all possible worlds.

—Frederick Paul Kiesche III

Swords & Glory

by Frederick Paul Kiesche III and Steve Sherman

The Tekumel Source Book (Swords & Glory, Volume I)

Swords & Glory is a recently-published roleplaying system inspired by and descended from the ***Empire of the Petal Throne*** roleplaying game first published by TSR in 1975. In reality, however, ***S&G*** is a whole new game.

The ***Tekumel Source Book*** (hereafter ***TSB***) is the first of three major volumes that together constitute ***Swords & Glory***. The ***TSB*** provides players with a world in which to game. The next two volumes — a ***Player's Handbook*** (reviewed below) and a ***Referee's Handbook*** (forthcoming) — deal with the mechanics of the ***Swords & Glory*** game.

The ***TSB*** is written for no particular gaming system. Like Chaosium's ***Thieves' World*** and (to a lesser extent) Iron Crown Enterprises' Middle-earth series of supplements to adventures, the ***TSB*** is a "generic" product, adaptable to any gaming system. This is a great strength, because the world of Tekumel is available even to those who don't have ***Swords & Glory***; but it's also a weakness, because players and referees who want to use the ***Swords & Glory*** system will have to wait for the ***Referee's Handbook*** (or devise their own statistics) in order to game many of Tekumel's creatures and magical devices.

The ***TSB*** is full of information covering the many aspects of Tekumel. Among its subjects are the physical structure of the planet, its inhabitants, cultures, customs, religions, social structures, politics, eating habits, food, beverages, animals, weapons, armor, technology, marriage and burial customs, the significance and uses of magic, and a host of others. *Anything* you need to know is covered, usually in minute detail.

The ***TSB*** is not just a rehash of material previously printed in ***Empire of the Petal Throne***. True, about half of the material in the ***TSB*** was mentioned in ***EPT***, but the amount of detail contained in the new edition is *staggering*. Subjects covered in a few paragraphs in the original now fill many pages. Nothing from ***EPT*** has been left out, and there is a *lot* of new information.

Some may find the amount of information overwhelming. The ***TSB*** is long, and — with two columns of small type on each page — quite dense. We don't see this is a drawback, however: It is quite possible to read the ***TSB*** straight through; but you can also get a lot out of the book by skimming and skipping from one fascinating subject to the next. A good referee will find dozens of adventure ideas here, ranging from underground explorations to overland journeys to palace intrigues. There is no fluff or extraneous information; you get more than your money's worth.

The main problem with the ***TSB*** is its table of contents. Each rules section is numbered, as is each subsection — 1.42 is "Dwellings and Settlements," for example, while section 1.423 is "The Sakbe Roads." This itself isn't bad; the problem is that the table of contents lists only the section and subsection numbers — there are no page numbers! The numeric listing is greatly appreciated, but it is hard to find what you are looking for just the same. An index would have been a great help.

If you have any interest at all in Tekumel; if you've been running ***EPT*** using the old game system; if you want to *start* a Tekumel campaign; or if you just like strange worlds and wondrous societies, this is your book. For just $25, the ***TSB*** provides more information and detail than any other single product — and many multiple-volume products — on the market. Even after several readings, you'll still be discovering new and worthwhile information. The ***Tekumel Source Book*** is a beautiful work.

Tekumel Player's Handbook (Swords & Glory, Volume II)

The ***Tekumel Player's Handbook*** (or ***TPH***) is the centerpiece of the ***Swords & Glory*** roleplaying system. Character generation, combat, and sorcery take up most of the book, though ample space is devoted to other matters. The game system described in this tightly-packed, 240-page rulebook can best be described as *realistic* and *complex*. It is not suitable for the occasional player, but, rather, for those who take their roleplaying seriously. The author's respect for his audience is clear.

Character Generation

Rolling up a character is relatively straightforward. The basic statistics — height, weight, build, strength, stamina, dexterity, body damage points, intelligence, psychic ability, comeliness, charisma, and age — are determined using percentile dice. Then you choose

"Simulation, to me, is the desired end. I want my adventures to be as 'real' as possible."

Tekumel Source Book

your character's birthplace, which affects such qualities as family wealth, education, and personal skills; and you determine your languages, religion, family ties, and skills. All information about the character is written on the *eight-page* (!) Character Record included with the ***TPH***.

Skill Selection

Characters receive skill points based upon their intelligence and age. This initial point total is combined with a percentile roll to yield a character's total skill points. The net total can vary tremendously — from 6 to 250!

You use these skill points (as you might expect) to buy skills. Certain skills cost more than others; the butcher skill costs five points for the lowest "level"; the warrior skill goes for *twenty* at the lowest level (and more for higher levels).

Your character's background limits skill selection. A poor character from a tribe may be limited to such skills as butcher, fisherman, or warrior; an upper-class character with a high wealth score can select from such skills as alchemist, physician, or sorcerer. In addition, many skills require minimum intelligence or literacy levels. The only way to get around these limitations is to spend extra skill points, or to bring your character's educational level into play.

Each level of the Assassin, Warrior, Official, Priest, and Soldier skills gives the character four "competence units." Players can use these competence units to buy *sub-skills* of varying cost and effectiveness. Characters that get a considerable number of these points can make plenty of interesting choices. For example, if you purchase five levels of the Warrior skill, you get twenty competence units. These could be used to select sub-skills like disguise and tracking (one competence unit each), shield (one unit), dagger/knife (one), long one-handed weapon (two), unarmed martial arts (four), quarterstaff (three), and sling (two). Again, as with skills, most sub-skills have levels of proficiency; each level in a particular weapon gives a +1 in combat.

The basic procedure for spell selection is similar to the one just outlined: Players with the Sorcerer or Shaman skill get 25 "spell purchase points" for every skill level purchased. The Sorcerer or Shaman skill level determines a spell's maximum power level. Most spells have many levels of intricacy; higher levels cost more and take time to learn. The ***TPH*** lists 194 spells, but so many of them include different levels of effect that the actual number of spells is much higher. For example, at its first level, the *Elicitation* spell simply provides the caster with a hazy mental picture of the last person to handle an item; just one higher level of the spell enables the spellcaster to ascertain how "magically powerful" that person is; and so on.

Actions

After you've determined your character's profession, income, and what kinds of expenditures you have to deal with (food, armor, clan contributions — these things can really add up!), you're ready for action. Each action a character attempts is given a time rating in one-minute turns, or six-second combat rounds. Actions which can be performed within a single six-second combat round are given an action *point cost*. In addition, each character has an action *rating* (based on Dexterity). A character rated for five action points could jump down from a ledge (one point), strike a blow with a dagger (two points), and dive for cover (two points) in one combat round — if all goes well.

Any time a character tries to perform a particularly difficult action, he or she (or it) makes an "Adventure Roll." This is when the basic attributes get a workout! In the preceding example, the character would make two Dexterity rolls — one for the jump and another for the frenzied dive for cover. All your basic statistics come into play, for Adventure Rolls in various situations.

Combat

You're given a combat value based on your height, strength, and build statistics. Combat values range from −5 (insects) up to 14 (really *tough* creatures). Your combat value is added to your sub-skill level with your particular weapon (if any) to determine the final combat value.

To see if a hit is scored, the attacker's final combat value is compared with the defender's value on the hand-to-hand combat chart. This yields a "to hit" number. If the attacker rolls that number or less on percentile dice, a hit is scored. A beginning character usually has a 40% chance at *best* to hit anything — and against high-ranking defenders, the odds get a lot worse!

Each type of weapon has its own damage chart. Damage is determined by rolling a d20 and checking against the chart. Shields absorb some of the damage done by a successful attack. Small shields protect the user 20% of the time, while a large shield provides protection at a rate of about 60%. If a hit gets past a shield, armor (if any) absorbs some of the damage.

In addition to the basic combat system outlined above, the ***Swords & Glory*** rules cover missile weapons, surprise, unarmed martial arts, artillery, wounds, morale, damage from falls, damage from fire, hitting specific body areas, and virtually every other eventuality.

Magic

The sorcery system is complex, but easy to learn. All spells fall into a phylum (determining who can and cannot learn a given spell), and a category — either "Psychic" or "Ritual." Psychic spells can be used under virtually any conditions; they require no gestures or speech. Ritual spells require full use of the arms (for gesturing, presumably), and equipment of one sort or another is necessary. Most spells, regardless of phylum and category, can be prepared and cast in a single combat round.

Each spell has a psychic power cost; your psychic point total is figured from your Intelligence, Psychic Ability, and Psychic Reservoir. You draw from this total when casting a spell. Use these points wisely; it's quite possible to blow them all with just a few incantations. And your recovery rate varies; after your character rests, you roll percentile dice to see how many points you regained. Bad luck can keep you waiting a week or more to return to full strength.

Character Advancement

You gain "victory points" by defeating opponents or using spells effectively; these can be spent to increase your skill levels or buy new skills or spells. The most important skills cost *2000* victory points for each level gained!

Characters can improve through study and practice as well as through successful adventuring. However you go about it, learning something new takes time; it's not instantaneous.

Conclusions

Do ***Swords & Glory***'s parts combine to make a good game? The answer is a definite "yes." Although there are times when your head begins to spin at the sheer depth of it all, careful reading proves quite rewarding. Professor Barker's writing style sparkles with wit; and there are subtleties to the ***Swords & Glory*** system that can only be grasped by reading the rules yourself.

It seems clear that some parts of the game could be ignored in

"We cannot keep your Tekumel from drifting away from mine. This is as it should be. You have just bought MY Tekumel. Now make it YOUR Tekumel."

Tekumel Source Book

order to quicken the pace — this is especially true in combat. But as Professor Barker points out (in the interview on page 20), it's a lot easier *not* to use what's provided than to spend long hours trying to fill in gaps in the rules.

Swords & Glory gives players a sharper sense of *reality* than any other game on the market. These volumes chronicle a logical, consistent world that never ceases to amaze. Everything is well-thought-out, and nothing ever seems contrived or silly.

The ***Tekumel Source Book*** and the ***Player's Handbook*** are jammed with interesting information and (it need hardly be said) *very* complete. Players looking for a frivolous romp in the world of fantasy had better look elsewhere. There is nothing but substance here, and you'll have to spend some time ingesting the information. It's worth the effort.

The ***Swords & Glory*** system does have some problems. The first is the price. At $25 for the ***Source Book***, $20 for the ***Player's Handbook***, and at least $20 for the forthcoming ***Referee's Handbook***, ***S&G*** is running a hefty $65 for the set. That is quite an investment if you're not sure you'll like the system.

There are ways to save money, however. The ***Tekumel Source Book*** can be used with your favorite game system, so you don't have to buy the ***Player's Handbook***. And if you're not sure you'll like Tekumel, read *The Man of Gold*, the ***EPT*** novel. If you like that book and the world it depicts, you'll most likely find Tekumel an enjoyable place to go adventuring. And of course, several people in a gaming group can share the costs of the books.

Other problems involve the physical construction of the books themselves. The large staples used to keep the pages together also prevent you from photocopying vital information without splitting the book. The books' covers started to separate from the pages in our copies after one week of moderate use. In addition, both rulebooks could have used another round of proofreading. There are a number of typos, and in one instance, half a paragraph was left out completely! (The bottom section of a paragraph on page 32 of the ***Source Book*** is just missing!)

In conclusion, the ***Swords & Glory*** game system has gotten off to a fantastic — if somewhat complex — start with these two volumes. It's a shame ***Swords & Glory*** is coming out so late in the game, as it were, and that the field is so crowded with RPGs. Many people will probably pass on the game because their shelves are already crowded with RPGs. They will be missing out on a fascinating universe.

Gamescience is a small operation taking a big chance bringing out such a big product. We hope that they (and Professor Barker) succeed, and that ***Swords & Glory*** takes its deserved place among the top games in the field.

SWORDS & GLORY VOLUME I: TEKUMEL SOURCE BOOK, THE WORLD OF THE PETAL THRONE *(Gamescience); $25. One 8½" x 11" 136-page book; one 21" x 27" full-color two-sided map. Generic supplement designed primarily for the* ***Empire of the Petal Throne/Swords & Glory*** *roleplaying systems. Published 1983.*

SWORDS & GLORY VOLUME II: TEKUMEL PLAYER'S HANDBOOK, FOR ADVENTURES IN TEKUMEL *(Gamescience); $20. One 8½" x 11" 240-page book; one 8½" x 11" 16-page "Combat Summary"; two polyhedral dice. Published 1984.* □

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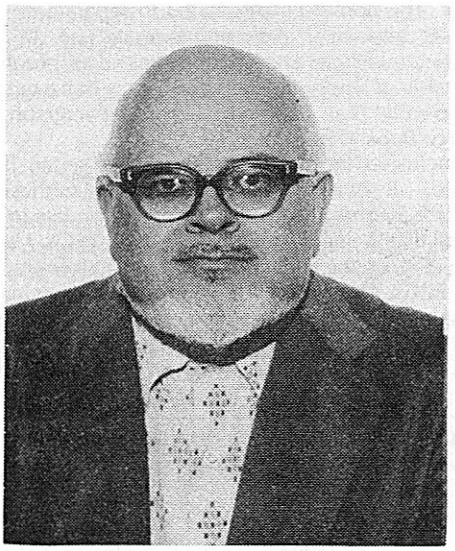
M. A. R. Barker



Professor M.A.R. ("Muhammad Abd-al-Rahman" — he is also known as "Phil" — "I have no preferences.") Barker is "around fifty" years old. He is of British, German, and Pennsylvania Dutch ancestry. His B.A. is in Anthropology and Linguistics, and he has a Ph.D. in Linguistics. He has traveled extensively in India, Pakistan, and elsewhere, and has taught in both the United States and Canada. He is currently a full professor in the Department of South and Southwestern Asian Studies at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis/St. Paul. He is best known to readers of *Space Gamer* for his ***Empire of the Petal Throne*** (***EPT***) and ***Swords & Glory*** (***S&G***) roleplaying systems, and for his recently-published novel *The Man of Gold* (DAW Books, 1984). This interview was conducted by mail in July 1984; the questions were compiled by Frederick Paul Kiesche III and Steve Sherman.

1: Swords & Glory

Space Gamer: Why did you decide to publish a new version of the ***EPT*** rules?

Barker: ***EPT*** was really a "first-generation" roleplaying game. It suffered from many of the same problems that the original ***Dungeons & Dragons*** did. Newer games had better mechanics. TSR responded by producing their ***Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*** set, followed by many modules. I felt the same need and determined to bring ***EPT*** up to "state-of-the-art" rulesmanship, though this meant reworking most of it entirely. It also gave me an opportunity to expand ***EPT*** to a whole-Tekumel (or at least whole-northern-hemisphere) format, with data on many countries, peoples, etc. that had been skimped in ***EPT*** to save space. Now the project is rather unwieldy: three thick books, plus a lot of peripheral material! It is now rather like a frigidaire stuffed with food: Open the door, take out what you want to eat, and leave the rest till later.

SG: What problems did you encounter in the redesign of the game?

Barker: Aside from the myriad problems of game balance and mechanics, the major issues were what to include and what to omit. One could expound for pages on magic, customs, on this or that society. I am still not satisfied, and there will probably be further, refined versions — if I live so long!

SG: What influenced you in the design of the new rules?

Barker: Various "state-of-the-art" games gave me ideas, but I carefully avoided "cribbing" from any of them. I wanted to include better magic and combat systems, which have both become a bit too lengthy and unwieldy. Ideas for shortening combat are provided in the ***Referee's Manual***. I wanted to put in an index to the ***Source Book***, but this could not be done for various technical reasons; it may appear later. All of this stems from my strong desire to provide a systematic, structured view of Tekumel — and to make this somehow compatible with a playable game.

SG: What are the main differences between the first rules edition and the second?

Barker: *Everything* is different about the new rules. They are based on a totally new system. Character generation, "experience," character development, combat, magic — all are restructured from the bottom up. Things are now more complex — which may dismay some gamers — but they are learnable and as complete as I could make them. Many gamers are now playing the new rules, and although there are some who prefer simplicity — and would dearly love to have an index! — most have adjusted nicely. After all, if things are not used, they can easily be omitted, while *not* having them available means that the referee cannot use them and must generate them on his/her own.

SG: Even so, there seem to be several things missing in the new rules edition: specifically, such things as the statistics for the various creatures of Tekumel and the "Eyes" reduced to gaming terms. Will these be forthcoming in the promised referee's book?

Barker: The creatures and magical items are indeed in the ***Referee's Manual***. This is now verging upon completion. Until it is published, I advise players to use the old ***EPT*** and "wing it" with both [systems]: Devise quick, impromptu statistics for combats with creatures, and make magical items that contain one or more of the regular spells listed in the ***Player's Manual***. The ***Referee's Manual*** also contains advice on encounters, NPCs, scenarios, etc.

SG: Do you think that the current lack of ***EPT***-associated adventures and supplements is a problem — especially when you compare ***EPT/S&G*** to such games as ***Traveller*** or ***Dungeons & Dragons*** with their dozens of supplements and adventures?

Barker: Modules and supplements are a priority for Tekumel Games, Inc. [*the new Minnesota-based company supporting* ***S&G*** *— Ed.*]. Were financing to become available, these would swiftly appear. Two have already come out this year. Tekumel Games already markets several books written by me about various aspects of

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Tekumel; it sells miniature figures and a set of wargaming rules for Tekumel; it also has subsidiary items, such as troop lists for the Five Empires, maps of the Northwest Frontier of Tsolyanu, etc. Depending upon funding, all of these will be enhanced and expanded. [*For reviews of these products, see pages 26-28*].

SG: What kind of input do you have on the various ***EPT*** products — i.e., the miniatures, the artwork that appears in the various books, the adventures, etc.?

Barker: Most of the artwork done by others for Tekumel is seen and approved by me, although a few items have slipped past. I own the copyrights, and one of the things I insert into any contract is my absolute right to approve or veto artwork, figures, names, places, or items of culture that do not fit! People do produce modules and articles and artwork that is *not* seen by me originally, but I must always approve of it before letting it carry the Tekumel name.

SG: Can you elaborate on the complexity of the game, and the relative ease of running a game of ***EPT/S&G*** if you are not M.A.R. Barker?

Barker: The game is complex — no more than ***Advanced Dungeons & Dragons, Chivalry and Sorcery***, or a somewhat complex campaign of ***RuneQuest***. It *can* be run by others than myself — this is proved by the fact that there are several groups out there already *doing* it. A referee has only to pick and choose the elements that his/her players enjoy, roll up characters (the ***Referee's Manual*** contains a checklist for this), and use as much or as little of the background as he/she wishes. Tekumel players can also keep in touch with the current "real" history of Tekumel by writing to Tekumel Games, Inc., 1278 Selby Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota 55104. This is *not* necessary: Anybody who buys the game can devise a campaign, develop its history and salient features, introduce creatures or ideas from other games, and run a game according to his/her own lights. I have often been surprised by the Tekumel-realism that some of these other campaigns have engendered: things that I have cheerfully incorporated into Tekumel's current "real" history, if the authors wish. For example, a game run way out in the town of Fenul on the eastern fringes of the Tsolyani Empire fitted so well into our own campaign that its author was granted the Governorship of Fenul and now regularly sends in reports to the Imperium. Another group has developed a complete island in the southern seas: It, too, will be added. Another distant player occupied himself with the politics of the Temple of Thumis; he is now Grand Adept, and his character is mentioned in one of the novels. *Et cetera*. If the campaign does not interfere with the "real" history (e.g., kill off the Emperor, raise a civil war, destroy the temples, etc.) it — or elements of it — can usually be fitted into Tekumel's "real" history, published in the *Tekumel Journal*, and made available to other gamers. The verisimilitude is astounding.

SG: What information is most essential to running a good game of ***EPT***?

Barker: A referee should explore the ***Source Book*** and the ***Player's Manual***, select a site (e.g., a specific city or country), read about it, develop some idea of the sorts of things to be encountered, and then work through enough of the rules to be able to generate some characters. The players can help in all of these tasks. The scope of the game depends then upon the group's predilections: "dungeon" adventures, out-of-doors scenarios, palace intrigues, mercantile expeditions, exploring, or whatever else is enjoyable. As time goes by, these things take on a life of their own, and adventures arise from other adventures. I suppose that the main things needed are imagination and patience. Trying to read the entire corpus of Tekumel materials at once is too much to ask; dig through and find only the items you need to start, then let further features come up naturally. Taken in reasonable doses, Tekumel can soon be assimilated.

SG: Any tips for prospective ***EPT*** referees?

Barker: There are combat and sorcery supplemental sheets with the ***Player's Manual***, and a referee can soon learn which tables are constantly needed. Filling out all of the character sheets is also useful, since these contain spaces for needed dice rolls, combat values, spell details, etc.

SG: Any tips for prospective ***EPT*** players?

Barker: Players, too, should try to learn the system. I myself depend heavily upon players to keep track of rules, spells, combat statistics, the current location of characters, possessions, etc. I never can remember a rule, even when I wrote it myself! I thus have a friendly "rules lawyer" in my groups who can magically find the right table and advise others. Players need mainly the above-mentioned qualities: patience and a good imagination. An ability to act, to be someone from another time and place, to think in Tekumelani terms (i.e., not to be just an American in a funny suit) is also very useful, although in some simpler campaigns, these things can be ignored or played down.

"Tekumel is, by American standards, a cruel and violent place: human sacrifice, slavery, violence, huge and totalitarian states, etc. My heroes and heroines accept these things as part of their daily lives and go about their business."

2: Barker

SG: Considering your many interests — do you see yourself as a "Renaissance Man"?

Barker: A "Renaissance Man?" Probably Neolithic! My interests in the ancient and medieval world are eclectic, but I do not drive a car, fly a plane, play outdoor sports, or do very many of the things modern Americans seem to enjoy. I know that this is not the thrust of your question, of course: I do a lot of things that fall into many categories: I write, I make woodcarvings and models of buildings and soldiers, I draw, I make color-overlay maps of Tekumel, I read copiously, I teach, I enjoy many subjects of discussion, etc. I am *not* very political, I don't drink or make good small-talk, I am a bit fuzzy on many issues that affect many modern Americans, I don't understand money and investments — and onward. I can handle myself fairly well in foreign cultures, ranging from the tribal peoples of central India and Baluchistan to modern Europe. But a "Renaissance Man?" Hmmm . . .

SG: Do you do your own ***EPT*** artwork? What media do you work in?

Barker: I do a lot of ***EPT*** artwork. Not all, of course. I enjoy doing pen-and-ink drawing, but for miniature figures and other items, I do quick pencil sketches. These are handed on to artists who do a lot better than I can do. Of course a good part of the original artwork for ***EPT*** was done by me over a period of many years, but many others have since come along to help.

SG: There are rumors that you carve your own miniatures for ***EPT***? Is this true? How many have you carved?

Barker: I did carve hordes of wooden figures for Tekumel when I was young, all in a scale of about 1 inch = 5½ feet. I have not done this for years, and all of the present ***EPT*** miniatures are done by others from drawings of mine. At one time I must have had a thousand or so wooden figures, but most of these were lost during my adolescence. All of the original buildings are now long gone, too, but one summer we did build a large (three-foot square) model of one of the temples of Vimuhla, right down to the furniture and the wall murals. We take this around to show at conventions now, and many have seen it.

SG: What do you think of the commercially available ***EPT*** miniatures?

Barker: Most of the current miniatures are very nice. They were carved by some of the best in the business. They are made exactly according to my drawings and specifications. More are in the works.

SG: Aside from ***EPT/S&G***, do you have any other favorite games?

Barker: I play miniatures: wargames with table-top lead figures. I have a good collection of figures, ranging from ancient Epyptians, to Persians, to Greeks, to Macedonians, to Mayans, to Normans, to early and late Medievals, to fantasy. I do not like gunpowder and thus have little experience with anything since the invention of the first cannon. I have written a set of siege rules which is so monumental that no one will publish it: about 400 pages! I also have campaign rules. We have played a variety of systems for ancients/medievals (written by my *very* distant cousin in England, Phil Barker), but now we are using a set of local rules written by a friend, Peter Panchyshyn. These are unpublished but fun. I also have devised other games: a form of ***Monopoly*** based upon the Mughal Empire of India, etc. Other than these, I play whatever people enjoy: ***Illuminati*** is a favorite, bridge and poker, etc. I used to play ***Dungeons & Dragons***, but this has been put aside due to lack of time and an available — and good — referee lately. I don't play many boardgames anymore, although I used to engage in SPI's ancient/medieval games once in awhile. Other than these? I'll play whatever my friends want to play, usually, and enjoy it.

SG: How often do you game?

Barker: We — my ***EPT*** players — have gamed about two evenings per week for seven or eight years now. We try to game miniatures at least once per month. Our ***EPT*** sessions last 2-4 hours, and our wargaming takes the afternoon and (hopefully) ends about 8:00 pm. We sometimes used to game ***EPT*** all night and end at dawn, but responsibilities (and old age!) have caught up with me.

SG: What is your favorite music?

Barker: I am not very musical. I do enjoy Indo-Pakistani classical music and various pre-1900 Western classical composers. I am, hence, a museum-piece as far as most modern folk are concerned . . . I have indeed tried my hand at composing temple chants and rituals for Tekumel, but these are thoroughly amateur and "for fun" only.

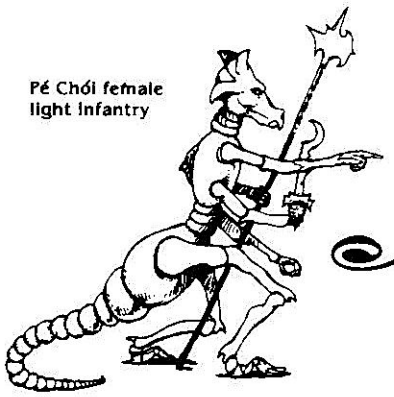
SG: What are your favorite books?

Barker: Hard to say. I have read science fiction and fantasy since the September, 1938 issue of *Amazing Stories*. I have a gigantic collection of Urdu literature; about a thousand handwritten manuscripts in Urdu, Arabic, Persian, etc.; a goodish gathering of texts on ancient/medieval history and warfare; lots of Anglo-Norman English history; much Egyptology; a smaller library on the Mayans and other cultures of Meso-America; and a shelf of books on western astrology. It is impossible to pick from all these.

3: The Roots of Tekumel

SG: What are the origins of your game?

Barker: ***EPT*** originated as my response to science fiction/fantasy, as I discovered in the old "pulps" of the 1940s. I have always had some sort of fantasy world — many children do — but my temperament led me to organize this, codify it, and try to write stories about it. I drew upon my interest in ancient Egypt (I was studying Egyptian hieroglyphics when I was about 10 years old), the Mayans, and ancient/medieval Europe and Asia. Mix these with science fiction/fantasy, boil well, and out came Tekumel. I added many features later as I continued my education: some from anthropology, some from linguistics, some from history and religious studies. Various friends who were interested in other aspects provided expertise on subjects I had no competence in: planetary movements and astronomy, geology, and the like. We — several friends and I — "played" Tekumel long before there were any rules of any kind; we took characters, carved wooden figurines, made building models, drew maps, did artwork, and generally had a good time. There were no combat rules at first, but later we developed a primitive system of dice-rolling, and a lot of other things. The "Underworlds" were originally just sketched, but we got around to graph paper later, and I even went so far as to make plywood models of "dungeons" to use. During this period I developed my own player-character (whose identity remains a secret), and we "gamed" in various parts of Tekumel. I wrote stories, exchanged these by mail with other budding writers (Lin Carter was one of my best and strongest critics), and accumulated rejection slips from the "pulps." After I went off to India, however, I put Tekumel aside and did "serious" things with my academic career. Occasionally, if the audiences were right, I'd take out some of the early maps and notebooks and discuss them



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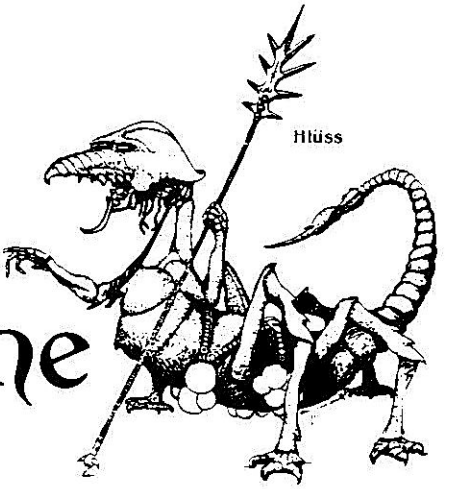

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THE MAN OF GOLD BOOK, authored by Prof. Barker, is published by DAW Books and is currently available in most bookstores. His second novel, *FLAME SONG*, is projected for release in June of 1985.

"... It is the most beautifully done fantasy game ever created." — E. Gary Gygax, 1975

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"The idea of Tekumel came first, plus a desire to write fiction about it. *Empire of the Petal Throne* was secondary."

with others, but it mostly lay in my attic for years.

SG: What are the literary roots of your game, especially in regards to such authors as Jack Vance — namely the *Planet of Adventure* and *Dying Earth* series — or Clark Ashton Smith and A. Merritt?

Barker: I read copiously, as I said. I was thus influenced by almost any and every writer you can name: Howard, Merritt, E.R. Eddison, Clark Ashton Smith, Lovecraft, etc. Vance's *Dying Earth* came along, I think, only in 1951, and I loved it. Thereafter, Tekumel veered a little towards Vance's type of universe, though minus the strongly science-fictional elements he uses. Tekumel probably also gained some visual color from the movies: *Thief of Baghdad, Sign of the Cross,* and many others. I loved the old Jon Hall/Maria Montez/Sabu/Turhan Bey potboilers. All of these things, plus the anthropological and historical stuff mentioned before, have certainly contributed.

SG: What are the personal roots of your game? I've heard a rumor that you first thought of ***EPT*** after a series of dreams you had as a child. Is this true?

Barker: No, no "dreams" or mystic visions. I have always had some sort of Tekumel. I don't really know where the *first* idea came from. The Tsolyani language (and others) also do not seem to have identifiable roots, although my interest in foreign languages probably came from living next to Basque neighbors when I was a child, in St. Maries, Idaho. My little playmates could speak a language that I did not understand, and keep secrets — which frustrated me no end! I think that I started to "invent" Tsolyani at this time, although I have no present recollection of doing so. It has now become so ingrained that I have developed a sort of mental trick: Ask me for any word in Tsolyani, and I seem to be able to shut my eyes, think a moment, and then come up with it. This does not mean that I know and speak Tsolyani fluently — I forget words and have to look them up, just as I do with Urdu or Arabic. I developed the Tsolyani script at about age 12 — I had not then studied Arabic, but the script works rather like Arabic: right to left, consonants written on the line, and vowel diacritics above and below. How I did this I do not know. (I probably read about it but do not now recall doing so.) The same with the other scripts and languages: They just come.

SG: Have your professional training and religious beliefs had any influence on the game or on the world of Tekumel?

Barker: My academic training has certainly had a huge effect upon Tekumel: anthropology, history, linguistics, etc. My own personal religious beliefs — Islam — are not represented, however. I did not join Islam until 1952, long after Tekumel was created and codified. The polytheistic pantheon of Tekumel's gods and goddesses would horrify any Muslim, of course — but then fantasy writers and authors are not required to believe in the political systems or religions of the worlds they invent! It's fiction. It is meant for interest and enjoyment, and I do not try to insert religious, social, or political messages consciously into my works, as for instance Orwell did. I do not assert that the sexual or social mores of Tekumel are "better" — nor are they put in to create a view of something to be avoided — they are there for "story" purposes. Tekumel is, by American standards, a cruel and violent place: human sacrifice, slavery, violence, huge and totalitarian states, etc. My heroes and heroines accept these things as part of their daily lives and go about their business. I do not think that "sex and violence" so far removed from the American scene has much deleterious effect upon adult readers (though one might argue that younger children should not be exposed to the doings within the Temple of Vimuhla or the orgies of the Goddess Dlamelish!). It is rather like seeing a movie about a far-off time and place: One can watch *Spartacus* and see whippings, crucifixion, slavery, and all sorts of things and never be much affected. The very same acts would be horrifying if the movie were to be about modern Los Angeles or New York, however. Sex and violence really seem harmful — to me, at any rate — if they are relevant to our real lives.

SG: How much influence did the original ***Dungeons & Dragons*** have on the original version of ***EPT***?

Barker: The original ***Dungeons & Dragons*** gave me ideas, a format, a system. I decided that it did not represent a holistic world, however, and my first attempts to put Tekumel into a game format were thus based somewhat upon the ***Dungeons & Dragons*** system, but with lots of overtones and features that were *not* represented. As said above, we had "gamed" Tekumel since I was a child; the methods developed in ***Dungeons & Dragons*** were thus no surprise, but the fact that somebody had codified them and developed them — and that this could be put into a game format and arouse interest in some of the gaming public — interested me. I wrote my version, printed it on purple hectograph sheets, and played it with others here at the University of Minnesota. Some of these original gamers are still with me.

SG: How do you feel in comparing ***EPT/S&G*** with other roleplaying games, including ***Dungeons & Dragons, RuneQuest, The Fantasy Trip, Tunnels & Trolls, Call of Cthulhu***, and others?

Barker: My effort in ***EPT*** was to add more of a "world" to the sorts of things we did in ***Dungeons & Dragons***. Tekumel is an integrated, whole-world system, originally designed as a background for use in writing science fiction and fantasy, but it fits so nicely as a background for roleplaying. I played ***Dungeons & Dragons*** almost from the first day that it appeared here in Minneapolis; I enjoyed it very much, but the unrelenting "dungeons" and lack of anything much to do once one had "returned to the surface" after an adventure soon palled. This has been much felt by other gamers, and the results during the past decade have been quite good: The ***RuneQuest*** system and worlds are fascinating, and ***Call of Cthulhu*** is very exciting. I have not played ***The Fantasy Trip*** or ***Tunnels & Trolls***. I have enjoyed ***Chivalry and Sorcery***, but we have never tried to game it. The same is true of ***Dragonquest*** and a whole host of recent games: Many appear repetitive, although with ever-better game mechanics, while others have simply passed me by.

SG: How did TSR come to market ***EPT***?

Barker: I did not wish to publish ***EPT*** originally, but Michael Mornard, who was a friend and fellow-gamer with Gary Gygax, convinced me to approach TSR. I sent Mr. Gygax a set of my rules and maps, and he responded enthusiastically. He advised me to make certain changes to make ***EPT*** more compatible with his major product, ***Dungeons & Dragons***, and this was done. TSR then published the game in 1975.

SG: What do you think of the treatment TSR gave to ***EPT***?

Barker: TSR's original version of ***EPT*** was quite splendid for its time: glossy plastic maps in color, a nice booklet, etc. I was impressed. The game turned out to be a bit too expensive for many, however, and ***EPT*** soon got the reputation for being the "Cadillac" of roleplaying games.

SG: How did Gamescience come to pick up ***EPT***?

Barker: TSR later decided that ***EPT*** had more or less run its course. I do not know exactly what their thinking was, but they eventually allowed the game to lapse, and when the opportunity to sell it to Gamescience appeared, they sold all rights.

SG: What do you think of the current marketing of ***EPT/S&G***?

Barker: Gamescience has had certain problems and constraints which are not my business, nor which should be discussed in an article or interview. They *are* trying. One could expect glossier, slicker production, more advertising, etc. if one were associated with a

larger company, but this has not transpired — and might not be entirely to my or Tekumel's benefit. Things do appear to be brighter for the future, now that the first novel is out.

4: The Man of Gold

SG: How did *The Man of Gold* come about?

Barker: *Man of Gold* is, at last, the thing that I intended to do with Tekumel all along: write science fiction/fantasy. It was six years in the writing, but it has been in my mind for almost *forty* years. I enjoy writing, I enjoy storytelling, and I must admit that gaming on Tekumel really needs no more than this and a few rules! (As one very famous game designer once said, "We should not tell people that they really do not need *any* rules; just being a good storyteller makes a game enjoyable. A good referee needs no rules; a poor one can have all the rules and background materials in the world and still not have a good campaign.")

SG: Why an ***EPT*** novel?

Barker: Why not? The idea of Tekumel came first, plus a desire to write fiction about it. ***EPT*** was secondary. The world provides enough interest to sustain many novels, I believe, and this can only be proved or disproved by putting out a novel or two and seeing if people will buy it. In this way, I am hoping that Tekumel will be as interesting a background as Vance's worlds, as Howard's, or as Lovecraft's, although necessarily different from all of these. I see no need to "justify" a novel about Tekumel, any more than Vance needs to justify a novel about Cugel the Clever.

SG: Where did the idea for the novel come from?

Barker: Who knows? I have many plotlines, based upon "current events" on Tekumel. I chose one of these that looked interesting to me, and it got written.

SG: Is this an adventure or a campaign that you have run or played in?

Barker: No. The characters of *Man of Gold* are not game-characters, although some of the secondary characters are: the Imperial Princes, the heads of temples, the Baron of Yan Kor. All of those are indeed mentioned in the ***Source Book*** and other materials, but they are not central to the novel. The hero, Harsan, and his adventures fit into Tekumel's "real" history, as do most of my campaigning games, but none of my player characters knew of him or had ever met him in the game.

SG: Did you receive a lot of encouragement from DAW Books?

Barker: DAW Books was tremendously encouraging. Donald A. Wollheim wrote letters to me ever since he saw a first draft of the first six chapters. He has been most supportive all along.

SG: Will there be more ***EPT*** novels?

Barker: Yes. *Flamesong* is already in DAW's hands. The third novel is begun, and the long-term plotlines of novels four and five are vaguely in mind.

SG: Can you tell us anything about them, or when we can expect them?

Barker: *Flamesong* should appear next year — it takes about a year to work through a publisher's pipeline. It deals with totally different characters in a different part of Tekumel, but it ties in with the present political situation neatly and gives some insight into other groups' activities in the constant intrigues and warfare. A few of the player characters do appear in *Flamesong*, although again not as primary characters.

SG: Are there any ***EPT*** films in the offing?

Barker: No. Wish there were. I'd love to see a film about Tekumel.

5: The Future

SG: What future ***EPT*** products can we expect to see?

Barker: Maps, modules, more *Journals*, more miniature figures, more books, more novels. Tekumel Games, Inc. has just been formed and it is charged with producing these items and selling them.

SG: Who else is licensed to do ***EPT*** products?

Barker: Gamescience is licensed to do the game itself, and it has the right to produce other items. This has not yet been done, however, and Gamescience seems willing to permit other, smaller companies to produce Tekumel-related items. It — and I — have the joint right to do this licensing. Thus far, we have licensed only Tekumel Games to produce anything related to Tekumel. We hope to hold it to this: one central company (aside from Gamescience, and aside from DAW Books, which produces the novels); others will not be licensed unless they work somehow through Tekumel Games. The reasons are obvious. I currently hold all Tekumel-related copyrights (as far as I know), and Gamescience, Tekumel Games, and I will work out something with those interested in further products.

"Ask me for any word in Tsolyani, and I seem to be able to shut my eyes, think a moment, and then come up with it."

SG: What is the future of ***EPT***?

Barker: I haven't a clue. I hope it succeeds and makes people as happy as it has made me over the years. I also hope that it gives an impetus to others who are designing their own worlds and games based upon them. Many have said that this is already true: There are fantasy figures not for use in ***EPT*** that look very Tekumelani, some games with ***EPT***-like cultures and features, etc. I wish them all well.

SG: What do you see as the future of gaming as a whole?

Barker: A large and tricky question: Gaming is a "fad," of course, like so many other American pursuits. It will undoubtedly continue to be enjoyed, but it may expand or contract according to various social factors and a fickle public. Now that this type of "cooperative and interactive oral fiction" has been developed (I refer here to role-playing games), I believe it will continue to be a feature of our lives, but it may take unpredictable forms and develop in ways that are hard to see. The games are getting slicker, better-organized, more comprehensive, and cover a wider range of backgrounds (e.g., Chicago in the 1920s). Players are increasingly more sophisticated and demand better products. The games are also becoming more age-stratified: Some games appeal to younger players, others to older ones — although here the dichotomy is not exact. Some younger players are better roleplayers than some adults. What is needed is imagination, an ability to dramatize and act as someone other than oneself, an openness to other cultures and periods, and a social milieu that encourages sitting around a table for several hours per week playing. Not everyone has this, and I cannot see any type of gaming replacing football or baseball! (Joke.) I thus think that gaming will continue to have a good audience, though this may increase or decrease according to other factors. The *Star Trek* phenomenon, for example, has reached a very large segment of the public through the television series and the movies; the game based upon *Star Trek* thus should be very popular — until something else comes along. Your question really demands a book — or two or three books by various specialists — and cannot be easily answered even so.

SG: What is the future of M.A.R. Barker?

Barker: "Ma-shaa-Allah," as it is said in Arabic: "Whatever God wills."I cannot say, except to note that I'm enjoying myself hugely and doing things that I have always wanted to do. I enjoy teaching, too, and hence I shall probably continue on at the University until retirement (I'm in my mid-50s now). I shall keep doing ***EPT*** until I finally get too senile to type, and that, I guess, is that. □

CAPSULE REVIEWS

Tékumel Products

by Frederick Paul Kiesche III

SUPPLEMENTS

THE TOMB COMPLEX OF NERESHANBO (Tekumel Games, Inc.); $4.95. Written by Mark Pettigrew. One 8½" x 11" 19-page book. For one to five beginning to intermediate-level players; playing time indefinite. Adventure for the ***Empire of the Petal Throne*** and ***Swords & Glory*** roleplaying systems. Published 1984.

The Tomb Complex of Nereshanbo is an independent roleplaying adventure for use with the ***S&G*** roleplaying system (although, with a little work, it could be converted for use with the older ***EPT*** system). Nereshanbo hiVridame was a "Mriyan" ("Bishop") of great power during the Second Imperium of Tsolyanu. He died under mysterious circumstances and was interred in a large tomb near the city of Jakalla. As the years passed, priests of the various "Lords of Change" frequented the tomb. Additional rooms and vaults were added, undead guardians were installed, various private and dangerous experiments were carried out. Then during the reign of Kurshetl Nikum I, the 50th Seal Emperor of Tsolyanu, the tomb complex was abandoned and almost all record of it was blotted from the memory of man. It stood silent until discovered by the player-characters of the adventure . . .

This adventure is a good introduction to ***EPT/S&G*** for beginning players in that much of the action takes place in the familiar "dungeon" environment. There is a good sense of balance in that the module is not overloaded with treasure, and the treasure that *is* present is offset by monsters and creatures powerful enough to make the player-characters earn their keep. However, there is probably *too much* hacking and slashing in this adventure. Having more intellectual puzzles for people to work out — counterbalancing the fighting — would have been nice.

This adventure makes good use of the information provided in the various ***EPT/S&G*** supplements. Descriptions of costumes and tomb architecture come from the ***Source Book***, while the ***Book of Ebon Bindings*** has provided some nice decorations and ritualistic details. These "rounding-out" details provide an additional "homey" touch.

The only puzzling part of the adventure is the referee's map provided with the adventure. Single or paired numbers (e.g., 3-4, 1-6, etc.) are noted at the entrances to many of the rooms. I first thought this might be an indication of what one would have to roll in order to open a door. However, there is a different procedure provided in the text of the adventure. Nowhere are these mysterious numbers explained.

Tomb Complex overall is a good starting adventure for ***EPT/S&G***. It will be interesting to see what else Tekumel Games has in store for us. If it can increase the intellectual portion of its adventures, and continue to delve into the large amount of information provided by Professor Barker as background, the quality of these adventures can only improve.

A JAKALLAN INTRIGUE (Tekumel Games, Inc.); $4.95. Written by Mark Pettigrew. One 8½" x 11" 23-page book. For one to five intermediate-level players; playing time indefinite. Adventure for the ***Empire of the Petal Throne*** and ***Swords & Glory*** roleplaying systems. Published 1984.

A Jakallan Intrigue is a rare bird among FRPG adventure modules — an adventure which is less another tired session of "kill-duh-monsters-and-grab-duh-treasure" than an exploration of the Tsolyanu society of the planet Tekumel.

In ***Intrigue***, player characters act in conjunction with several non-player characters acting as guards, assistants, etc., in the city of Jakalla. Jakalla will be familiar to most people who have played ***EPT*** as the city map which was included in the original edition of that game. The NPCs are major personalities in the upper crust of that city — known primarily by their nicknames — "The Black Veil," "The Warrior Count," "The Scarlet Count," etc. They are representatives of major power blocs within Jakalla and within Tsolyanu — the Priestly Party, the Military Party, etc. Each of the major NPCs has one or more goals, primarily information-gathering of various sorts. The PCs are supposed to be hired to participate in a series of events revolving around each of the major NPCs. To say more about these events and NPCs would reveal too many secrets — and ruin the adventure.

This is a well-written adventure and will serve as an excellent introduction to the world of Tekumel for many people who are unfamiliar with the social ramifications of Tsolyanu. There are even a few sub-plots which will satisfy those who lust for fighting or for dungeon-crawling. A high point of this module is the beautiful artwork of Lynette Schmidt, who did an exceptionally fine job depicting the NPCs who appear in the adventure.

There are a few problems, but they are minor. There is no calendar included, and the passage of the days plays an important role in many of the events contained in the module. There is a reference to an equipment list which was included in the original ***EPT***, but no mention of a similar listing that appears in ***Swords & Glory Volume II — Tekumel Player's Handbook***. Seeing that this adventure was written with those rules in mind (though, with a little work, it could be run with ***EPT*** rules as well), this is a fairly important oversight.

But ***Intrigue*** is an excellent adventure, far superior to much of what is currently on the market. A fine new product from Tekumel Games, indicating that we have real talent working there!

THE BOOK OF EBON BINDINGS (Tekumel Games, Inc.); $7.95. Written by M.A.R. Barker. One 5½" x 8½" 83-page book. Gaming supplement for the ***Empire of the Petal Throne*** and ***Swords & Glory*** roleplaying systems. Published 1979.

The Book of Ebon Bindings is a handbook of demonology for Tekumel, outlining the more famous (and infamous) demons of that plane of reality. It contains descriptions of 59 Major and Minor Demons, the history of the Book, and a narrative on religion on Tekumel. Scattered throughout the book are illustrations of various glyphs, ritual daggers, and symbols essential for contacting and controlling the Demons.

Ebon Bindings is one of the most fascinating of the ***EPT/S&G*** supplements, and can provide numerous ideas on how to embellish an ***EPT/S&G*** campaign. The major sources of information on Tekumel have mostly dealt with the Gods — the Lords of Stability and Change. *Ebon Bindings* fills a large gap by providing information on the Demons that many wizards use in their "day-to-day" work.

This is *not* a work for immature gamers, however. *Ebon Bindings* is graphic in its descriptions of various Demons and rituals — I'd give it a "PG13" rating if it were a film. However, there has always been a slightly "gritty" side to the religious life on Tekumel, and *Ebon Bindings* carries on this tradition.

Demons described include *Missum*, He Whose Name is Death, Master of the Forty-Sixth Circle, Servitor of the Lord of Worms; *Vlela*, The Maid of Despairing Delight, Mistress of the Fiftieth Circle, She of the Thousand Acts of Lubricity; *Gereshma'a*, He of the Mound of Skulls; and others. This book is another fascinating facet of the ***EPT/S&G*** game universe, and one well worth exploring if you're not faint of heart!

THE TSOLYANI LANGUAGE, VOLUMES I & II (Tekumel Games, Inc.); $11.95. Written by M.A.R. Barker. Two 5½" x 8" 59- and 129-page books. Gaming supplements for the ***Empire of the Petal Throne*** and ***Swords & Glory*** roleplaying systems. Published 1978.

Totally the invention of M.A.R. Barker, the languages of Tekumel add an extra dimension to the ***EPT/S&G*** games, a dimension missing from many other games such as ***Dungeons & Dragons***. *The Tsolyani Language* is meant for *real* ***EPT*** fanatics — those who want to get *deeply* into the universe of Tekumel. Not everyone will be interested in noun classes, quantifiers, and personal attitude prefixes. However, even if you delve only briefly into the language, it will certainly add a new dimension of mystery and excitement to your game.

Volume One is devoted to the basics of the Tsolyani language and includes discussions of pronunciation and grammar. This is followed by an excellent section called "A Guide for Travellers" which features many stock phrases and an example of conversation. Referees and players should be able to employ many of these stock phrases, thus incorporating the language into the game with a minimum of work.

Volume Two is an English/Tsolyani — Tsolyani/English vocabulary. This contains most

(if not all!) of the words that one should need in the course of any gaming situation. There is also a section on the right-to-left linear Tsolyani script. Again, this could be adapted to gaming use quite simply by writing English using Tsolyani letters — adding a puzzle to the game.

These volumes are highly technical and not for casual reading. Given Professor Barker's linguistic background, they are technically correct (and a little dry). They are not meant for every gamer or referee, but if you want to add an exceptional amount of realism to a game of ***EPT/S&G***, this will prove to be an invaluable guide.

"Muel, masun lummra tlattekh gual dopal!"

DEEDS OF THE EVER-GLORIOUS: HISTORIES OF THE TSOLYANI LEGIONS (Tekumel Games, Inc.); $7.95. Written by M.A.R. Barker. One 5½" x 8½" 102-page book. Gaming supplement for the ***Empire of the Petal Throne*** and ***Swords & Glory*** roleplaying systems.

Deeds of the Ever-Glorious outlines the histories of 85 of the legions in the Empire of Tsolyanu. Mentioned here are the great Imperial Legions, such as the Omnipotent Azure Legion (the eyes of the Emperor), The First Legion of Ever-Present Glory, and The Legion of Potent Destiny; the Legions of the various temples — The Legion of Hnalla, Master of Light, The Phalanx of Lord Durriltamish of the Rotted Face; and the Legions of the various cities — Legion of Mighty Jakalla, etc.

Legions in Tsolyanu are raised in a variety of fashions: by direct Imperial writ, by individual towns or temples, and sometimes by individual Lords or Ladies. These Legions become "personified" as time passes. Their deeds are recorded and sung about; feasts are held in their honor. Legions may die in dishonor and be expunged from the Book of Records, or new Legions may be born, with as much joy as the birth of a new child.

Deeds is a fascinating supplement for ***EPT*** players. The other ***EPT*** supplements and rulebooks have not really detailed the histories and personalities of these important institutions. Many of these — especially the Omnipotent Azure Legion — play an important role in the day-to-day affairs of the Imperium. *Deeds* goes deep into the history of these various Legions — outlining their birth, important events, and how various Emperors and Empresses have influenced them or abused them.

Deeds is an excellent supplement for those involved with ***EPT/S&G***. Much of the history given can be used in campaigns on Tekumel, to embellish adventures, fill in backgrounds, etc. Highly recommended.

PUBLICATIONS

THE MAN OF GOLD (DAW Books); $3.50. Written by Professor M.A.R. Barker. One 367-page novel, set in the universe of Tekumel, as popularized by the ***Empire of the Petal Throne*** and ***Swords & Glory*** roleplaying systems. Published 1984.

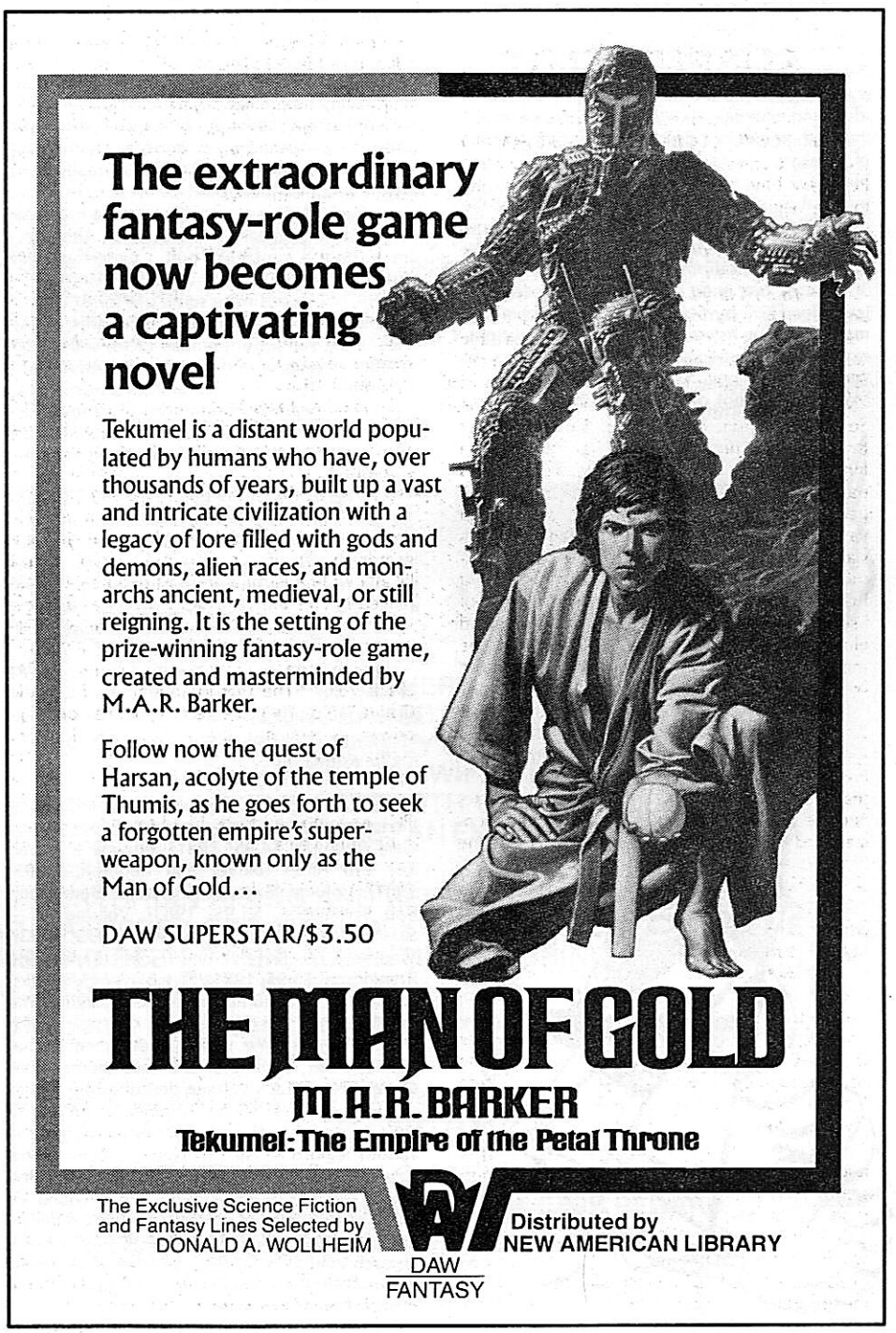
The Man of Gold is the first of a series — may it be a long one! — that takes place on the planet of Tekumel. It is a fine novel, much better than other efforts to "novelize" roleplaying games, e.g., Andre Norton's *Quag Keep* or Rona Jaffe's *Mazes and Monsters*.

The story concerns a priest of Thumis (one of the "Lords of Change") named Harsan. Harsan is a scholar, a student of languages — especially of the "dead" language of Llyani, an ancient empire of the planet Tekumel. Harsan gets caught up in the quest for the Man of Gold — an ancient technological device of unknown powers. The Baron of Yan Kor is seeking revenge upon all of Tsolyanu and has launched an all-out military attack with his own ancient technological weapon. As the book progresses, Harsan is caught in a myriad of plots and counterplots involving those who are trying to help or hinder the quest. Many of the names familiar to players of ***EPT/S&G*** — General Kettukal, Prince Eselne, Prince Dhich'une, the Baron of Yan Kor — are encountered as the book progresses. Harsan also travels to several famous sites of the game universe, including one of the Underworlds.

I enjoyed this book immensely. It made Tekumel come alive for me, more alive than any of the other source materials I've seen. It is especially useful in showing how different Tekumel is from our own society. For example, one of the main characters is "disfigured" in the eyes of her society by something that we would accept as commonplace.

The only complaint I've heard about the book is that some feel that you need to have played the game (or have some familiarity with Tekumel) in order to understand fully all that occurs. While it is true that there is no separate introduction designed to fill in background, the story itself explains all "foreign" terms and a good portion of Tekumel's history and customs. It may take a few hundred pages to get it all, but the time spent is well worth it.

I say "bravo" to Professor Barker and impatiently await the next Tekumel novel, *Flamesong*. If you love the fantastic fiction of A. Merritt, Clark Ashton Smith, or Jack Vance, you will find a new love in *The Man of Gold*. An excellent first novel and another fascinating facet of one man's universe — the Empire of the Petal Throne.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THE JOURNAL OF TEKUMEL AFFAIRS/THE TEKUMEL JOURNAL (Tekumel Games, Inc.); $9/year. Edited by Jeff Barry. Published six times a year. Gaming magazine devoted to the ***Empire of the Petal Throne*** and ***Swords & Glory*** roleplaying systems.

The *Journal* is a periodical that has appeared sporadically (so far as I've been able to determine) since 1977. Recently, it was acquired by Tekumel Games, the new gaming company that is devoted to products related to the ***EPT/S&G*** roleplaying systems.

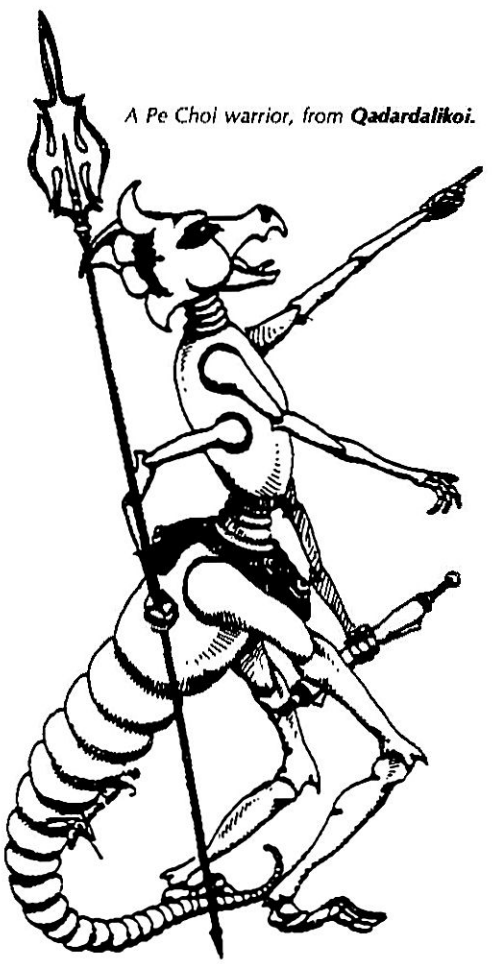
Volume III, #9, the issue reviewed, is a transition issue — there are three different typefaces used in the magazine! The magazine features few pieces of artwork, is made up of 16 xeroxed pages, is stapled, and has many handwritten page numbers, "continued froms," etc.

Now, from the above description, it would sound as if I'm completely panning the magazine. However, as stated, this is a transition issue — probably rushed out in order to meet an Origins '84 deadline. Once you get past the production problems, you'll find an invaluable source of ideas and materials about Tekumel. For example, the lead articles is a description of "The Temple of Karakan," by none other than M.A.R. Barker himself. The article is more than a rehash of the information given in the various editions of the rules — it contains much new information, especially specifics on the Temples and Priests of Karakan, War God of the Lords of Stability.

Also of use is an article on "New Magical Items for ***EPT***" by Mark Pettigrew. Fifteen new magic items are listed, with physical descriptions, explanations of special powers, and statistics for "gaming" the items. Especially amusing is "The Marvellous Inkpot of Gratstsatla the Wise" and "The Talisman of the Blue Lady." Other articles include a description of armor and some brief news items that could be nicely worked into an ongoing ***EPT*** campaign.

Tekumel Games has a few back issues still available. The company plans to issue a single-volume "Best of the Journal" that would include the most useful and interesting items from past issues. Submissions to future issues are being eagerly sought.

In sum, a useful item, especially if the company can overcome production and transition problems and start putting out an item of higher production quality. Well worth looking at.



*A Pe Choi warrior, from **Qadardalikoi**.*

MINIATURES

QADARDALIKOI ("The Great War") (Tekumel Games, Inc.); $9.95. Designed by Jeff Barry and M.A.R. Barker. One 8½" x 11" 69-page book. For an indefinite number of players; playing time indefinite. Published 1983.

Not being a miniatures buff, and having been asked to concentrate on items useful for the *roleplaying* versions of ***EPT***, I can't really comment directly on the quality of these rules. However, ***Qadardalikoi*** is a well-produced rulebook, well-written, and easy to understand. Although I am *still* not a miniatures buff, I understand that particular gaming passion a lot more now.

This book does have some use for RPGers. It describes the Armies of the Five Empires; the armies of the various nonhuman races; and a large number of tactical and strategic maneuvers and formations. The book is embellished with a large number of beautiful illustrations of various martial scenes. Spells employed on the battlefield are described, and naval battles and equipment are mentioned.

The book can be applied to the ***EPT*** roleplaying game in a variety of ways. Descriptions of military equipment are certainly useful; depictions of all of the Human Empires and most of the nonhuman races certainly come in handy. A referee willing to work can adapt the descriptions of naval battles and battle magic to a roleplaying situation.

Qadardalikoi is thus a mixed blessing to ***EPT*** RPGers. Most of the information pertains to miniatures, and will most likely be useless. However, there is much useful stuff for those who are willing to work a little.

THE ARMIES OF TEKUMEL (Tekumel Games, Inc.); Volume I — *Tsolyanu* (M.A.R. Barker and Gary Rudolph, $4.95, 1981), Volume II — *Yan Kor and Allies* (Barker and Rudolph, $4.95, 1981), Volume III — *Mu'Ugalavya* (Barker and Bob Brynaldson, $3.95, 1983), Volume IV — *Salarvya* (Barker and Brynaldson, $3.95, 1983), Volume V — *Livyanu and Tsolei* (Barker and Brynaldson, $3.95, 1983). Five 8½" x 11" books. For an indefinite number of players; playing time indefinite.

This five-volume series is designed primarily for use with the ***EPT*** miniatures rules ***Qadardalikoi***. Each volume describes the armies of one or two Tekumelani empires: First it gives a general description, then it discusses each of the various legions — e.g., Tsolyanu's "Omnipotent Azure Legion," Mu'Ugalavya's "Vermillion Battalion," and so on. Illustrations are provided for many of the types of soldiers, showing different armament, variations between legions, etc. Finally, each volume provides a painting guide keyed to the illustrations, including color guides to the various nonhuman races.

Although much of the information provided is keyed for use with ***Qadardalikoi***, there are some items useful to a referee of a roleplaying game. Names, locations, and strengths of various legions can be used in encounters or rumors. Referees can use the illustrations and painting guides not only for painting miniatures, but also to help in describing people that players encounter.

Volumes I and II are typeset using a fairly clean, readable typeface. Later volumes use a dot-matrix printface which is almost unreadable in several places. We may hope future editions will be reset using a more readable type.

This can be a useful item if you're willing to dig out the information for RPG scenarios. Otherwise, you can probably skip it and your campaign will be just as exciting. Definitely a "look before buying" item.

EPT *Miniatures* (Tekumel Games, Inc.); prices vary from 60¢ to $35. Sculpted by Bill Murray, Tom Myer, Jeff Barry, and Brian Apple. Produced in 1983.

Tekumel Games is producing quite a line of ***EPT*** miniatures. Currently (or soon to be) available are a full line of Tsolyani, Yan Koryani and Mu'Uglavyani military figures; a number of friendly nonhumans (Shen, Pe Choi, etc.); several unfriendly nonhumans (Ssu, etc.); three creatures; and four clerical figures.

I purchased a variety of Tsolyani military figures, two Black Ssu, a Hluss, and a priestess of Avanthe. The miniatures are 25mm in scale, and are nicely sculpted. Most do not require assembly — the Ssu and one of the military figures come in two pieces, and only the Hluss came in more than two parts. Each miniature was free of flash, highly detailed, and painted up nicely and cleanly.

Problems with the line are few. There is a preponderance of military figures, mostly because the figures are primarily meant for use in the miniatures game ***Qadardalikoi***. There are no "civilian" miniatures (townspeople, "generic" adventurers, etc.) as yet, and only three females (a priestess of Avanthe, a priestess of Dlamelish, and an Aridani with a javelin).

Tekumel lends itself to beautiful miniatures, what with the elaborate costumes worn by the priests and priestesses and the detailed armor worn by the military. It is nice to see that Tekumel Games has been able to carry this beauty into the miniatures.

Future Tekumel-related products include a series of adventure modules designed for beginning gamers. By the time you finish these starter modules, you will be familiar with roleplaying and with the world of Tekumel. Other future releases include an introductory version of the ***Source Book***, more miniatures, more adventure modules, and a collection of the best articles from past issues of *The Tekumel Journal*.

Outside submissions for *The Journal*, modules, adventures, and supplements are being sought.

To order products from Tekumel Games, Inc., send a check for the amount of the product(s) plus 10% for shipping and handling to:

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COMPANY REPORT

Tékumel Games, Inc.

Tekumel Games, Inc. is a company dedicated to the promotion of the game world of Tekumel created by Professor M.A.R. Barker and first brought to the public eye in 1975 in the game ***Empire of the Petal Throne***. Working in cooperation with Gamescience of Gulfport, MS and Professor Barker, Tekumel Games is developing and producing a number of Tekumel-related items.

Since Tekumel Games is based in the Twin Cities, we have direct access to Professor Barker. The company policy is to do everything possible to insure that all Tekumel Games products are fully compatible with the "real" world of Tekumel as envisioned by Professor Barker. To enhance this process, Professor Barker is a member of the company's Board of Directors, giving him direct and quick access to the workings of the company. This access has also been extremely helpful to Tekumel Games, enabling the company not only to insure product authenticity, but also giving us ready access to a valuable source of ideas.

Tekumel Games carries a diverse line of products. We offer a bimonthly magazine, *The Imperial Courier*. This journal of things Tekumelani includes studies of languages and scripts, suggested rules for covering things such as the Hirlatke arenas and military service, war news, chronicles, new races — anything on Tekumel.

This magazine replaces *The Journal of Tekumel Affairs* and *The Imperial Military Journal*. Both these earlier magazines have been absorbed into *The Imperial Courier*. Also, a "Best Of" compilation is being prepared from these earlier magazines.

We carry the entire line of Tekumel miniatures, not only the line previously offered by Old Guard and Ral Partha, but new figures as well, with more planned. The Northwest Frontier maps give the terrain for the battlefields of the great war between Tsolyanu and her northern neighbor, Yan Kor, to be complemented in spring of 1985 by the Northeast Frontier maps.

In non-military matters, we have *The Book of Ebon Bindings*, the definitive work on religion, magic, and demonology on Tekumel. The language of Tsolyanu, the largest and greatest empire on Tekumel, is presented in a two-volume work entitled, logically, *The Tsolyani Language*. In addition, *The Tsolyani Primer* offers a course on "basic Tsolyani in 17 easy lessons" in a less technical, though less complete, manner than the *Language* volumes.

Tekumel Games is a young company, having incorporated only earlier this year; with the support of the new Gamescience products and the first Tekumel novel, *The Man of Gold*, we have a strong growth potential. We are actively seeking submissions of any sort relating to the world of Tekumel, and expect to be limited only by what we can afford to do at one time. Thanks to the support of Gamescience and Professor Barker, we are in a very strong position regarding Tekumel, and we hope to continue making more and more of the world of Tekumel available.

Michael Mornard, President
Tekumel Games, Inc.

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MINES IN STAR FLEET BATTLES

by Walt Mizia

The most neglected weapon in *Star Fleet Battles* is the mine. Be it a devastating nuclear space mine or a mere transporter bomb, this orphan offers a multitude of tactical options to the player who can be creative with the rules. By making the most of each ship's mine load, you can increase your combat potential significantly — and surprise your opponents.

There are many different types of mines available in the *Star Fleet Battles* arsenal. This article will deal with the two types normally carried by most starships: the nuclear space mine (warhead strength of thirty-five damage points) and the lowly transporter bomb (T-bomb), which does ten points damage.

Background

The normal mine load of starships in *Star Fleet Battles* is twelve transporter bombs per ship. Romulan War Birds, War Eagles, and their derivatives also pack a nuclear space mine. Mine layers have varying mine capacities, depending on the class of ship. You can lay an effective minefield using the normal mine complement of an average starship. A cruiser-sized ship carries a forward shield of about thirty boxes. *One* T-bomb will put a substantial dent in this most important shield. A nuclear space mine will take it out completely.

Starships lay mines in two ways. Small mines such as transporter bombs are transported up to five hexes from the ship, using one transporter per T-bomb (*Figure 1*). A shield must be dropped for the entire turn to use this method, and this condition must be announced to the opponent.

While in most cases shields away from an enemy's line of fire can be safely dropped for transporter use, two weapons, the Hydran Hellbore and the Enveloping Plasma Torpedo, can thwart this tactic. Either of these weapons will affect all shields of a target simultaneously. However, the Hellbore requires two turns to load and fire, while the enveloping Plasma Torpedo takes three turns. The mine-laying player can wait for a reloading turn to safely drop masked shields.

When faced with an enemy that can use multiple enveloping weapons with staggered loading cycles to provide complete coverage every turn, the mine layer has two options: Beef up the general shield reinforcement to mitigate internal damage through the open shield; or forego using transporters to place mines, relying exclusively on pre-plotted drops through the shuttle bays.

That's the other method. Mines can be dropped in hexes that the starship passes through by dropping one mine per shuttle bay each turn. Shields stay up, but the mine hexes must be pre-plotted. You can drop both nuclear space mines and T-bombs this way.

Mines laid by starships in the heat of battle normally operate in the automatic mode. Once activated, a mine will detonate if any moving object enters its own hex or the six hexes surrounding it. All units in this area suffer the full effects of the mine blast. Mines can also be designated to explode only when influenced by a specific size of ship, ignoring any that do not meet the criteria for detonation. Only one mine per hex, per impulse, per influencing object can detonate. You should always use the secret placement option — otherwise, what's the point?

There are various ways to avoid detonating mines. Stationary objects will not set off a mine. Ships moving at five hexes per turn or less can roll a die to determine if the mine explodes. Ships may be able to avoid mines. Depending on the type of ship, its speed, and the number of mines, detection is possible from one to ten hexes away.

Cloaked ships have certain advantages and disadvantages when dealing with mines. A cloaked ship can drop mines from its shuttle bays into pre-plotted hexes. It can employ transporters to project T-bombs, but this will void the cloak for the impulse the transporter is activated and the following impulse.

Uncloaked ships must roll a die upon entering a mine detonation zone to determine if the mine will explode. Rolling a one, or any number less than the ship's speed, will blow up the mine. Ships under the cloak get to add three to their die rolls, reducing the chance of setting off the mine. However, cloaked ships lose the ability to detect nearby mines.

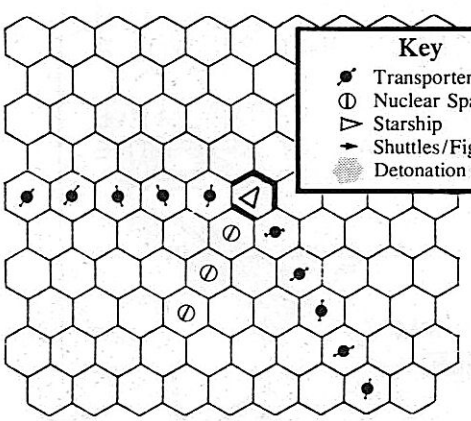

Figure 1

Mine Laying. The #3 and #5 shields are dropped to allow the transporters to place T-Bombs out to a range of five hexes. Other mines can be dropped out of the shuttle bays with the shields up if the drop is pre-plotted.

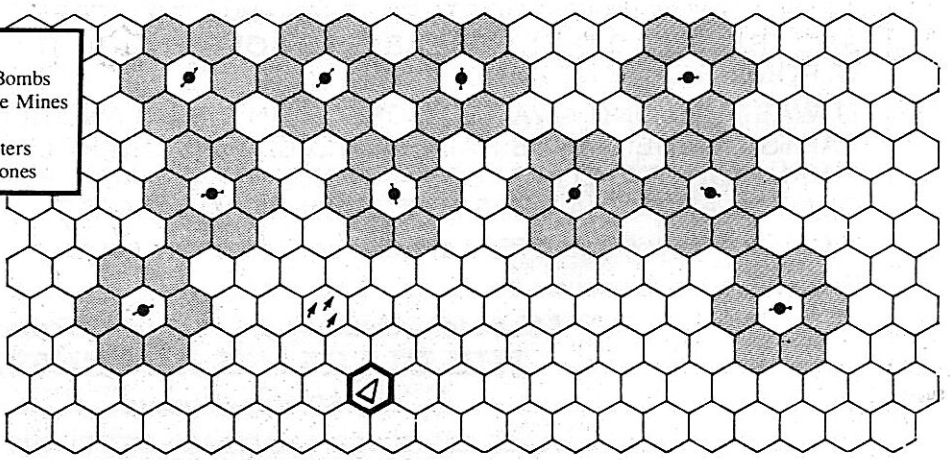

Figure 2

The Sanctuary. The placement of the mines allows a secret slot for friendly transit of the mine field. Shuttles and fighters are in position to challenge intruders. Note that this formation uses only the mines carried by one average starship.

The Fundamentals

The most common battle scenario is the ship-to-ship duel. A mine field can tip the odds toward an opportunistic commander. Concealed by your battle maneuvers, plant a secret garden of transporter bombs. By deft manipulation, you can coax your enemy to transit the mine field. Two or three collisions with T-bombs are not good for the forward shield.

If the enemy vessel is a different size from your own, you can set the mines specifically for the enemy's starship class. Then you can cross the mine field freely — and hope your enemy will follow.

A mine field can be used to negate an enemy's strength. If the enemy's strong suit is drones or fighters, a string of T-bombs programmed for these small units can erase their threat in short order.

The Sanctuary

The sanctuary tactic is used to gain a breathing spell during a battle. Hide behind it while recharging plasma torpedoes; if you prefer long-range battles, build a wall of mines to keep the enemy from closing in.

The sanctuary is set up by laying a string of mines to form a barrier (*Figure 2*). The mines should be three or four hexes apart and at least two hex rows deep. Leave secret openings in the barrier to allow your forces to sally out for close assaults. Seal the flanks with mines laid at the end of the barrier and behind the principal mine line, to catch enemy ships making end runs; save some mines as a reserve for opportune situations. Use fighters and shuttles to guard the mine line and to serve as a reaction force to thwart penetrations.

The first time the enemy commander stumbles into the sanctuary, he will hit a few mines due to his ignorance of the situation. Just because he has a low, sloping forehead, don't think he can be had the second time around. He will figure out counter-tactics. So change the rules by using one of these variations on the sanctuary theme:

The Hoax. Fake the laying of the mine field. Maneuver friendly forces just as in the basic sanctuary scenario. Operate the friendly forces as if a mine field were in place. Launch the fighters and shuttles to patrol the phony barrier. The enemy's psychological fear of hitting what he cannot see will keep him from pressing an attack. After observing the enemy's pattern of movement, drop the mines where he is sure to run into them. Don't signal this drop in any overt manner; let him find out the hard way.

The Slot. Lay the barrier, but leave a *wide* slot for the friendly forces to get through the mine field. Be obvious as to its location. Tempt the enemy to use it and to attack through it. When he takes the bait, drop mines or transport them in place from ships standing by for such a purpose.

The Misplaced Mine Field. Lay the mine field ten hexes closer to the enemy than normal. Deploy your forces to deceive the enemy. Leave a few sally ports to run starship attacks through. If the enemy uses standard sanctuary counter-tactics, he will find out early in the battle where the *real* barrier is waiting. Insult his intelligence when he blunders into the mines, then finish him off.

The sanctuary concept lends itself to infinite variation. These are examples of many possible mine deployments. The rule is, "Do the unexpected."

Mines as Anti-Drone Weapons

Mines and transporter bombs can be effective weapons against drones. All drones in the mine's three-hex-wide area of effect will be destroyed. If you set the mines to explode *only* on drones, they won't restrict your own movement. If the attacker's drone wave is in a tight formation, one mine might take out the entire drone wave. There are various ways of applying mine tactics in the anti-drone role.

Drone attacks on the mine layer can be negated by allowing one of the battle line to drop its shield and lay a barrier across the line of approach of the attacking drone wave.

Another method of laying a barrier for a static battle: all the ships advance in line abreast to the proposed barrier line. They all do a high-energy turn at the barrier line, having plotted the mines or T-bombs to be laid on the intended barrier line, then the ships proceed to their bombardment positions (*Figure 3*). No shields need be dropped when laying a mine, nor need the enemy know mines are in place. The first wave of enemy drones will waste itself on the secret mine barrier. A ship can be detailed to replenish the barrier with transporters as the original mines in the barrier are used up.

A battle line can advance and use T-bombs against drones. Each ship in line abreast drops a shield facing away from the enemy (e.g., the number two shield). Each ship can place a transporter bomb in front of his neighbor, in this case, to the right. As the drones approach, they will be killed when they hit the T-bombs. Only the ship on the left end will be unprotected; it should be furthest from the enemy. This same tactic can be used to kill enemy fighters and shuttles. Be sure to exempt this class of your ships from setting off the mines!

Mines and Retreat

Mines dropped in the path of pursuing ships can destroy the forward shields of the chaser and break up the chaser's formation.

Go to top speed, to force the chaser to stay as close to the retreating ships' plotted courses as possible. If the chaser is too far to one side, make a few turns to bring him onto the same course. If running at top speed, the chaser's power will be used for movement, not for shield reinforcement.

Plot all mines to drop in a string in the path of the chaser (*Figure 4*). Only one mine can detonate on one ship per hex, so don't drop all the mines in the same hex. If the shields are dropped to transport T-bombs, you have to tell your opponent the shields are down, so he may suspect the trap.

Mines exert psychological influence far out of proportion to their actual physical effect. An enemy stung by a mine will be forever mindful of the trick in future high-speed chases. This too can be of use to the runner in those future retreats. Duplicate the conditions of the first incident and the chaser will find himself spreading out his fleet (reducing the effect of his firepower by dissipation), reducing his speed, and increasing shield reinforcement (enabling a runner to increase his distance). This psychological handicap may allow a runner that would fall easy prey to a determined chaser to escape.

Conclusion

Mines obtain their potency from a combination of surprise and uncertainty. An unexpected explosion on the forward shield can shake the confidence of any commander; and once mines are known to be in use, uncertainty takes its toll. Precautions taken to avoid damage hinder battle effectiveness. Power normally allocated for offense is transferred to shield reinforcement. Speed is curtailed to allow for mine detection. Pursuit plotting becomes an open invitation for a string of mines to be laid in the path of the starship. This overcompensating caution gains nothing. The mine victim has lost the initiative and is well on the way toward losing the battle.

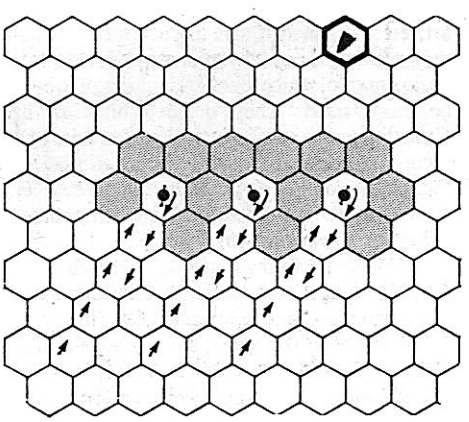

Figure 3

The Anti-Drone Barrier. The mine layers approach the intended mine barrier, drop mines into their pre-plotted positions, do a high energy turn, and proceed to bombardment position for the siege.

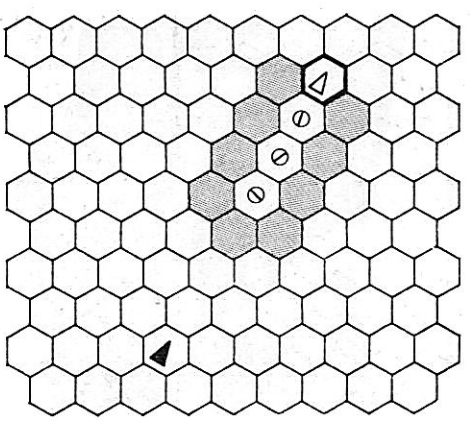

Figure 4

A Surprise for the Chaser. Once the chaser has gone to pursuit plotting, the runner can drop a string of mines in the chaser's path and take out his forward shield. Drop one mine per hex.

TOME's Cthulhu Modules

by William A. Barton

Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu* RPG has proven itself to be one of the most popular roleplaying games of recent years. A lot of gamers, it seems, enjoy becoming Cthulhu-fodder. One mark of a successful game is its ability to spawn licensees — game companies other than the parent who pay for the right to produce supplements and adventures for the game. *CoC* has already spawned (hate to sound repetitive, but the word is so *apt* for *CoC*) one such licensee — Theatre of the Mind Enterprises, Inc., which has, to date, published four scenario books for the game. One of the more recent is a 70-page, three-scenario collection titled ***Whispers from the Abyss and Other Tales.***

Background

Before examining this latest glimpse of ancient horrors, a brief profile of TOME might be in order. The name "Theatre of the Mind" comes from Herman Hesse's *Steppenwolf*, in which a character sees the name on a sign in an alley and finds himself meeting Goethe, who tells him the meaning of life. Before being applied to the company, the name belonged to an "interactive theatre" run by Larry Flournoy, whose artwork graces the cover of ***Whispers*** and other TOME books. (The theatre, TOME's Steve Rawlings told me, continues under the name "Gaslight Mystery Theatre," and presents live mystery dramas in which guests come out of the audience and take part in solving the mystery at hand — very much like a roleplaying game.) This theatre connection lives on in TOME's scenarios, all of which are divided into "Acts," the characters described as the "Cast," and so on.

TOME came into being in August of 1982, when the people who now make up the company — all with various talents in publishing, art, etc. — joined forces to put together what they conceived as a different type of RPG scenario, one in which background detail would be emphasized. They decided on ***Call of Cthulhu*** as the game best suited for this, and secured a contract from Chaosium to publish four scenarios: ***The Arkham Evil, Death in Dunwich, Pursuit to Kadath*** and, of course, ***Whispers From the Abyss.***

TOME's offerings are all intended for *CoC*, though, in some instances, the Cthulhoid connection has been tenuous at best. (In one of the scenarios in ***Whispers***, there is none at all.) This is a tendency for which TOME has received some criticism. ***Arkham Evil*** was probably the most Mythos-related product of the lot so far, its three interconnected scenarios featuring a number of standard Mythos monsters and situations. The second TOME adventure, ***Death in Dunwich***, was almost completely devoid of Cthulhoid trappings except that Lovecraft's town of Dunwich was the setting for part of the scenario, a version of the *CoC* Resurrection spell was in play, and there were several clues (red herrings, actually) that seemed to lead to answers of Cthulhoid significance, but which proved more mundane in truth.

Death was lambasted in at least one review for playing with the expectations of the investigators in such a manner. While this is a valid criticism, especially for a Keeper running a group of inexperienced players, the scenario could also be viewed as an interesting change of pace for experienced *CoC* investigators (similar to a couple in Chaosium's ***The Asylum*** and ***Cthulhu Companion***). With a few changes, it could even prove suitable for use as an occult-oriented scenario for such systems as ***Mercenaries, Spies & Private Eyes***, ***Daredevils***, or Tri-Tac's ***Stalking the Night Fantastic***. Still, it did introduce even more non-Cthulhoid occult influences — two warring occult societies (one associated with the Bavarian Illuminati), zombies, and so on.

Pursuit to Kadath was TOME's worst offender in this regard. While the main scenario and shorter bonus, ***The All-Seeing Eye of the Alskali***, did have more Cthulhian references than their predecessor — including Nyarlathotep, the *Al-Azif*, Yig, Father of Serpents, and a new Cthulhoid race, the Alskali (one-eyed giant cyclops) — the mix of non-Mythos occult materials was even more pronounced. Yig, in particular, was distorted almost beyond recognition as far as any past Mythos references. The greatest criticism that can be leveled against this scenario, however, is its name: In the stories of Lovecraft and his imitators, Kadath was the mythical land of dreams — or a blasted plateau in the cold waste — as noted in *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*. Yet in ***Pursuit***, the Kadath of the title is a town in Turkey, not the Lovecraftian Kadath at all. According to Rawlings, TOME felt that a scenario set in the surreal Kadath of the Mythos would be too difficult to do right, so they opted for the more concrete setting of the "real" Kadath. The title was not an intentional deception.

Whispers from the Abyss

Whispers from the Abyss and Other Tales, at least in the title scenario, turns away to an extent from the altered (or misleading) Mythos trend of the last two TOME products. It consists of three scenarios: ***On the Wings of Madness*** by Chip Bickley, ***De Schip Zonder Schaduw*** by Ed Wimble, and ***Whispers from the Abyss*** by Tom Bailey. In all three scenarios, TOME shows its commitment to emphasizing background data — especially in ***De Schip Zonder Schaduw***, which includes sev-

eral lengthy sections of log entries from an actual book called *Voyages to the East Indies*.

In *Madness*, the investigators must retrieve a stolen papyrus manuscript of a version of the Egyptian Book of the Dead from its thieves aboard the German zeppelin *Friedrich der Grosse*. It's different from other *CoC* scenarios in that it takes place not in the '20s, but in 1933, and almost entirely aboard the zeppelin. This has one obvious advantage in that gunplay must, of necessity, be kept to a minimum to avoid the untimely deaths of the players in a hydrogen fireball — a good way to keep the scenario from degenerating into a shoot-'em-up, as can too often happen with "over-enthusiastic" (translation: gun-happy) players. The book includes a cardstock insert showing a sideview of the zeppelin, with deckplans of the passenger gondola. Unfortunately, other sections of the craft, where action may also occur, are not depicted.

This scenario isn't developed as well as it could have been. The background information describes two versions of the *Book of the Dead*, one a published version and the other the manuscript; the text of the scenario itself is sometimes vague or contradictory as to which is being referred to. Other than interacting with the passengers and crew of the zeppelin, and snooping around in other people's quarters, there isn't a lot for the investigators to do. The Cthulhoid ties are again somewhat tenuous — the only actual Mythos connection being a group of Byakhees kept in a secret compartment (a second compartment contains giant eagles). There are some touches of humor here and there, and in the hands of a Keeper and players who enjoy roleplaying characters to the hilt, the scenario could be enjoyable (as long as the Keeper is prepared to improvise a lot). Still, *On the Wings of Madness* is the weakest of the three scenarios in the book.

De Schip Zonder Schaduw is more interesting in that player-characters actually find themselves trapped aboard the legendary *Flying Dutchman*! This is the longest of the three scenarios, and also the only one with no Cthulhu connections at all. Paradoxically, it proves to be the most intriguing of the lot, and a nice change of pace for veteran players. (In explaining why TOME's *CoC* scenarios often have so little to do with the standard Lovecraft Mythos, Rawlings affirmed that it was because so many players are so familiar with the Mythos, either through the original stories or the *CoC* rulebook, that TOME prefers to explore variations on occult themes — not an unreasonable consideration.)

Schip starts out with another zeppelin ride, this time on the vessel *Der Gross Kurfust*. Player-characters have been hired by a Mr. Feldspar (the patron in *Death in Dunwich*) for one of three purposes: to "recover" — i.e., steal — a certain gem being transported aboard the zeppelin; to protect the gem; or they may simply be aboard the zeppelin for other, unrelated reasons. Eventually, the investigators will be thrown together in a common struggle for survival when the zeppelin crashes at sea. An old-time sailing ship near the site of the crash "rescues" the characters, but things aren't quite what they appear to be. The characters spend the rest of the adventure figuring out just what they've gotten themselves into . . . and how to extricate themselves from trouble.

The back of the cardstock insert in the book shows the deck of the sailing ship, *De Thetis*, though no interiors are depicted. As an added bonus, the scenario includes a section on generating thieves as player-characters in *CoC* (including such variations as "Politician"), with several new criminal-oriented skills. These are all noted as optional, unofficial, additions to the rules, but they are helpful to Keepers and players.

The main problems in *Schip* are the organization of the background material and the slow development of the scenario once the players become aware of what's happened to them. While the extensive background on Captain Vanderdecken and his ship is interesting, it is not necessary to playing the scenario; a summary would have done just as well. And the manner in which it is presented, interspersed with passages about the zeppelin, is confusing at times. Still, for those who don't mind the absence of the Mythos, this is possibly the best scenario of the three.

The title scenario, *Whispers from the Abyss*, will probably be the most satisfying for those who require at least some Cthulhoid traces in a *CoC* scenario. It concerns the disappearance of the colonists of Roanoke Island, Virginia between 1587 and 1590. A number of

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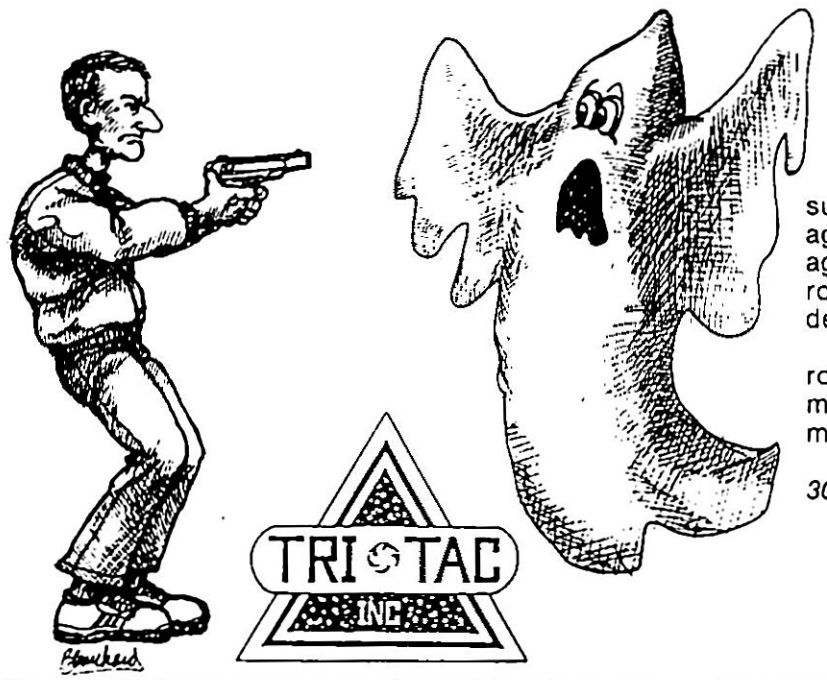

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"answers" to this mystery have appeared in occult, fantasy, and SF literature over the years, and it seems only natural that a Cthulhoid explanation would eventually be advanced (and that TOME would be the company to do it). Again, the Cthulhoid connection is vague, but it *is* there, in the form of a new Mythos creature, the Croaton.

One area where TOME's products have really improved over the first couple releases is in artwork. The interior artwork on ***Arkham*** and, especially, ***Dunwich***, was atrocious. While a couple of the illustrations in ***Whispers*** are rather crude, most are of professional quality. Sadly, while the artwork seems to have improved, the text has deteriorated. Whatever new typesetting system TOME used for this book produces text that is highly unattractive, and there are a great number of typos, transposed pages (49 and 50), completely dropped lines, and poorly justified margins as well. I'm hoping this was a temporary experiment and that in future publications TOME will go back to its old type style.

Whispers is the last of TOME's original four-scenario *CoC* contract. It won't be their last scenario, however, as the contract has apparently been renewed and more TOME *CoC* adventures will be forthcoming. TOME has also obtained the rights to publish a series of Napoleonic products and, among other projects, has plans to go into miniatures. *CoC* will remain the focus of their efforts, however, and that could prove to be a good thing for those who like their Cthulhu unconventional. Whether TOME will continue to improve, as they have during the last year, and what the future may bring — not even the *Necronomicon* can predict for certain.

Whispers from the Abyss and Other Tales (TOME, Inc., 2706 Hamilton Rd., Kirkwood, NJ 08043); $10. Designed by Chip Bickley, Ed Wimble, and Tom Bailey. One 8½" x 11" 70-page book. Published 1983. □

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And This Just In . . .

"GLOZEL EST AUTHENTIQUE!" (TOME); $10. Designed by Stephan Rawling and E.S. Erkes. Adventure for ***Call of Cthulhu***. One 8½" x 11" 64-page book. For Keeper and six players; playing time indefinite. Published 1984.

Following in its tradition of mixing the historical with the cult mysteries of the Cthulhu Mythos, TOME's newest *CoC* adventure book ***"Glozel Est Authentique!"*** sends investigators to the site of an archeological dig in France to determine its authenticity in the title scenario, and to the heart of Stalin's Moscow to learn the "Secrets of the Kremlin" in its second adventure. The title of the book is from an actual French headline of the '20s, and player-characters will become embroiled in historical controversies that lead to dangers never suspected by those involved at the time. Each scenario includes maps of the important locations — the dig site at Glozel, Paris in the '20s, the grounds of the Kremlin — including several interior plans, plus full *CoC* stats for NPCs and six pregenerated player-characters. Introductory notes for the Keeper, plus several appendices, provide necessary information, including historical notes on occult topics from the Knights Templar to the Albigensian heresy.

The wealth of historical material presented in these scenarios makes ***Glozel*** of value to any *CoC* Keeper, whether he or she wishes to run these particular adventures or not. Extras such as timetables of life in Glozel, tables of archeological artifacts discovered and a complete 1929 calendar add immensely to the background flavor of the setting. The idea of Stalin keeping a Cthulhoid horror in the depths of the Kremlin seems darkly appropriate, too. And ***Glozel*** is also notable as being the most Cthulhian of any of TOME's *CoC* scenarios yet.

Most problems that crop up in this book are map-related and relatively minor at that: No layout is provided of the mayor's house in Glozel as referred to in the text; the map of the tunnel system under the Kremlin is just a bit difficult to follow from its written description; the Paris map is hard to read; and no scale is provided for the various maps and floorplans — though the latter can easily be deduced from the drawings of furnishings. The adventures themselves are a little inconclusive, too, depending more on the actions of players and the Keeper's discretion than any set course — no problem for the experienced, though novices might experience a few false starts and setbacks. And TOME's recurring theme of warring secret societies crops up yet again.

Overall, ***"Glozel Est Authentique!"*** is probably TOME's best *CoC* adventure pack to date. If you've liked TOME's past releases, you'll love this one; even if you haven't cared for past adventures, this is one you should take a look at — as a French/Russian sourcebook for *CoC* play, if nothing else.

—William A. Barton

Searching for Cthulhu in Nightmare House

by Matthew J. Costello

Nightmare House may have been the best boardgame of 1983. That it is the finest boardgame dealing with the supernatural is undoubtedly true.

It appeared in the now-departed *Ares* magazine (issue 15) with a wondrous map displaying the detailed floor plan for the spooky house of your dreams. Just looking at that house gave me the same kind of thrill conjured by a rainy afternoon's Chiller Theater. But there was something more than the board; there was a top-notch game designed by David Marshall.

In the multi-player game, the players can become a variety of characters who seek to rid Darkholm Manor of the evil that infects it: There's Kate, last of the Darkholms, a medium obsessed with the Darkholm curse; Lorenzo Lane is a magician eager to debunk the mystery; Father Eamonn Doran has felt the icy challenge of the house; Dr. Ben Addams remembers the patient who died with the name "Darkholm" on his lips. Eight other characters round out the merry crew, each with varying psychic and physical abilities.

One player runs the house, sending a connoisseur's collection of haunts to panic and possess the foolish folk who seek to exorcise the house. All of this action is directed by the Entity, the "evil" at the center of the house. As the players "clean" rooms of haunts, through psychic and physical combat, they discover useful and dangerous items. They can attempt to enter the astral plane to exorcise rooms and, ultimately, battle the Entity itself. The astral battles are fought on a separate map, displaying eight concentric rings of power with the Entity at the center.

The Entity is a tenacious tenant. Characters can get lost on the astral plane, panicked, or possessed, while the house grows stronger with each passing hour. The simulation of supernatural battle is very vivid, and the programmed rules make following the detailed and realistic action very easy. Like I said, it's a great game, and beating the house is no easy matter.

But if the evil presence *is* chased out of the house, might not some new ghastly resident be ready to move in? Surely some demented slave of Cthulhu has noticed the odd angles and jutting peaks of this multi-leveled mansion. The crypt alone offers untold possibilities for the followers of the mad Arab, Abdul Alhazred. The putrid atmosphere in the attic would surely prove to be a dank, fertile medium in which a lively fungus of a most disgusting hue might grow.

Because you see . . . the house can *never really be cleaned!*

★ ★ ★

Though ***Nightmare House*** could be used with a number of roleplaying games — ***MSPE***, ***Gangbusters***, and ***Daredevils*** among them — it's a natural match for ***Call of Cthulhu***. What follows are three suggestions for integrating this scary little number into your Lovecraftian campaign.

1) *The Side-Trip:* ***Nightmare House*** is such a great supernatural game that any Investigator will enjoy trying to clear up the Darkholm curse. Let the Investigators run their regular characters, if they wish, but inform them of the deadliness of the house — they may not want to risk losing their favorite characters playing a boardgame.

Assign the Investigators Physical Strength and Psychic Strength (the two important characteristics in ***Nightmare House***) based on the following formulae:

Physical Strength (*NH*) = STR (*CoC*) ÷ 3, round to the nearest number and add 1.

Example: A Call of Cthulhu character with a STR of 13 would have a Physical Strength of 5 in NH: (13 ÷ 3 = 4 + 1 = 5).

Psychic Strength (*NH*) = POW (*CoC*) ÷ 3, round to the nearest number and add 1.

Example: Someone with a CoC POW of 10 would have a Psychic Strength of 4 in Nightmare House: (10 ÷ 3 = 3 + 1 = 4).

To add flavor, roleplaying can be introduced in the form of Kate Darkholm seeking the Investigators' help; newspaper clippings can supply Investigators with the history of the house and of its residents — Library Use rolls required, of course. If, however, the Investigators begin exploring, they must start playing, as per the *NH* rules, at 6 p.m. The Keeper, of course, runs the house.

2) *Integrating* ***Nightmare House*** *into your Campaign:* The game can easily be integrated into your campaign and can, in fact, play an important role. The Curse of Darkholm Manor remains as it is presented in ***Nightmare House***, with the Investigators picking up bits of information about it as they pursue whatever mysteries you currently have them looking into. At some point they become aware that important information (or items) they need are in the house. Place a key element in your campaign — an important book, a painting, or even a spirit — in the Manor. (You can use any of the discovery markers supplied with *NH* — just make a note about what the object really is.) The Investigators may not feel the need to exorcise the house, but that might prove the only way to get what they came for.

Of course, you may want to stick in a minor Cthulhu Mythos horror or two . . . maybe a Deep One rising from the open, watery pit in the cellar. A pair of ghouls would probably find the house most congenial.

3) *The Manor of Madness, or Cthulhoid Cut-ups Chez Darkholm:* The ultimate use of ***Nightmare House*** is as a total environment for the adventure you're running. This involves a good deal of work but will be well worth it. Each "Discovery" listed in the game (Nick's Ghost, Nora's Ghost, Portrait of Alastair, etc.) should be replaced with an appropriate item or spirit from the scenario you're running. They can be used to provide the Investigators with clues about the scenario's secrets, to increase POW and Magic Points (temporarily), or even to provide useful items of great power. As in the normal game, some of these discoveries should be merely "atmospheric" while others remain nuisances (like the "Cold Wind" that blows out lit candles).

Changing the haunts will be a more difficult matter. There are too many of them for a normal ***Call of Cthulhu*** adventure. But this is one incredibly *evil* abode. Use the "special effects" haunts listed in the game's Haunt Summary — haunts like "Bats," "Cold Spot," "Creeping Mist," and so on. These are good and scary, and should push the Investigators closer to panic and possession.

Other major haunts should be replaced with creatures, objects, and traps appropriate to your campaign. If there's a Deep One infestation in the house, there will surely be demented human followers; slimy, webbed footprints in the hall (SAN Roll, please); enclaves of Deep Ones scattered throughout the house; and perhaps the spirit of Father Dagon as the Entity itself.

As far as exorcising whatever central horror occupies the house, that's for you to decide. It may be that you just want the Investigators to find what they need and then make a quick departure. Or perhaps the "final conflict" could be run using normal ***Cthulhu*** Combat and Magic rules. Still, the astral plane conflict is so exciting I'd suggest using it to "clean house" and for any showdown between the Investigators and whatever controls the house.

In summary: If you don't have ***Nightmare House***, by all means get it . . . soon. (Who knows if TSR will allow this gem to disappear?) Use it with your party of Investigators as a side-trip, or as a main course. It will give one and all a healthy quota of gooseflesh.

Oh, I almost forgot to mention that the game solos extremely well. But after midnight, when the wind sends branches scraping against your window, you might begin wishing it didn't solo *that well.*

Just remind yourself . . . it's only a game. □

KEEPING POSTED

Politics, Politics, Politics

ANGRELMAR

The Court of Kings

by Scott D. Haring

Angrelmar: The Court of Kings is a historical roleplaying PBM game set in the medieval world of Angrelmar. No magic, dragons, elves, or wizards here — the closest thing to a life-threatening situation is an occasional pirate raid or the expansionism of a neighboring noble.

No, the name of *this* game is politics. Alliances, weddings, ceremonies, intrigues, councils, denunciations, treacheries, proclamations, and the occasional skirmish to settle what can't be settled with words. Each player takes the role of the head of a powerful family, either Royal, Noble, Church, or Tribal. Even if a character dies, it's not the end: The player takes over the character's heir and continues to play. In a sense, the player is roleplaying a dynasty, not just one character.

Angrelmar is human-moderated. Ray Estabrook founded the game a few years ago when it grew from a roleplaying campaign he moderated in Cornish, Maine. Until recently, he shared the moderating duties with a partner, a person who also participated in the game as one of Angrelmar's most powerful characters, Archbishop Hidric of the Imperial Church. But a recent shake-up has left Estabrook and his wife alone to run the game. Turnaround times average four weeks, and the cost is a flat $3 per turn.

Communication between players is crucial, as you might expect in a politics-dominated game. Once characters reach the highest level of friendship (in game terms), each player is given the other's address for private communication. Before then, all communications are passed through the moderator.

The tangled web of court intrigue, as played by numerous Counts, Dukes, Bishops, royal family members, and others, can become terribly complicated. This is one of ***Angrelmar's*** major failings. There are so many names, so many factions and churches and events, that it is extremely difficult to tell the players without a program. Keeping track of who's on which side can get very confusing, and while the political confusion of court intrigue may be historically accurate (and I suspect it is), it's very unsettling for players to begin to think they have a grasp on the situation, only to have a player or faction bolt in from the blue and upset everything.

Each game turn is one year, and in addition to a narrative telling the results of the past year for each individual, each player receives a copy of that year's entry into the annals of the land. (I remember how excited I was when my humble little Count finally got mentioned in the annals — I felt like I had accomplished something.)

There is supposed to be an economic facet to the game, but to be honest, I haven't seen how it affects play. Every hex on the map of the continent is rated by AEFs (Area Economic Factors). Each hex's AEFs are split among the powers (royal, church, and noble) that have influence in that hex. But I have never been thwarted from performing an action because I didn't have enough AEFs, and AEFs don't seem to have much of an effect on any other players, either.

I'm also concerned about the quality of the components. The narratives each player gets for turn results are quite nice, but the maps and other reference materials are poor-quality photocopies of hand-written originals. On the assumption I just got a bad set, I wrote for some replacement maps, but they were as illegible as the first bunch. I hope in the future the gamemasters will consider redoing (and then copying on a good machine) the important maps and forms.

A few months ago, ***The Court of Kings*** gamemasters undertook some improvements. They redesigned (and made much neater, by the way) the turn sheet players use, adding to the list of possible actions a player could take. The only problem was, they forgot to tell anybody what the new actions meant! The rules are similarly vague (or missing altogether) on a number of points. I found myself sticking with the actions I knew would work, and otherwise making things up as I went along. The gamemasters were flexible enough to go along and I pretty much got done what I wanted to, but the lack of clear rules definitely contributed to my feeling that I was not in control of my character, at least not completely.

On the other hand, this game is filled with fine roleplayers who have helped make the game a lot of fun. I didn't realize how seriously other players were taking this game until I got my first letter from my Prince. It was calligraphed on parchment with a wax seal. And that was only the beginning . . .

For players who like their PBMs full of negotiating and roleplaying ***Angrelmar*** may be just fine. The experience of the same is more like reading a book than a battle report, but people interested in making history won't mind. The company has taken steps to improve some shoddy components, though they still have a ways to go. And the promised revised rulebook can only improve the game as well. Those looking for something other than "hack-and-slash" may find it here.

Angrelmar: The Court of Kings (The Court of Kings, Box 263, Cornish, ME 04020); $10 for rules and set-up, $3 a turn. Designed by Ray Estabrook; human-moderated; four-week turnaround. □

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KEEPING POSTED PBM Update

—Adventure Systems—

Illuminati PBM

The increase in new enrollments has been gratifying, particularly as it seems to be based heavily on excellent word of mouth. Games #10, #11, and #12 have all started during the past month. Games #10 and #12 are normal games, with a minimum turn-cycle of one week. Game #11 is a "half-speed" game, in which players are limited to one turn every two weeks. This will allow our busier players, as well as those in Canada, Hawaii, and Alaska, to compete on more equal terms.

We have winners in *Illuminati* games #2 and #3! Doug Jordan, high priest of the Servants of Cthulhu, led the way with a perfectly-timed campaign in Game 2. Doug's basic strategy was to develop a very strong but compact power structure before initiating an all-out dash for victory. This allowed him to keep a low profile, avoiding attackers for most of the game, but it also created some real risks at the end, since he acquired groups so rapidly that he had no opportunity to defend them.

As it turned out, he just barely made it. Two days after he took control of his thirty-third and winning group, the League of Vampires launched a massive attack at a key group in Doug's power structure. Had he stopped even one group short of victory, he would have lost 14 groups — and any real chance of winning — before his next turn. That's cutting it close!

Less than two weeks later, Jeff Ferris led the terrestrial branch of Boskone, the well-known galactic criminal conspiracy, to victory in Game 3, knocking out no fewer than *five* other Illuminati along the way in a virtuoso display of power, diplomacy, and deception. Interestingly, both he and Doug built their power structures up to 19 groups before trying for victory, with Doug then picking up 14 additional groups in two turns and Jeff getting 19 more groups in three. Congratulations to them both for hard-won and dramatic victories!

The first four games of *Illuminati* were the playtest games, which started almost simultaneously back in February, so it is not surprising that two of them would produce victories close together. Games #1 and #4 also seem very close to victory, so all four playtest games will probably have been won by the time you read this. Meanwhile the battle for second place is heating up in Games #2 and #3.

Games #5 continues to be a hotbed of conflict. The Yellow Peril jumped to an early lead, but was effectively wiped out in a vicious attack by a small, well-coordinated alliance. Rumors are flying as the remaining players attempt to organize to meet the threat.

Conflict in Games #6 and #7 has been much more tentative, mostly confined to battles over specific groups, as players concentrate primarily on building up their power structures and increasing the size and strength of their groups. Both games are fairly even so far, with #6 being especially notable for intense diplomatic activity and heavy message traffic. The remaining games are still too new to have developed much of a distinctive flavor, although several players have an early lead in #8 and have been diligently probing each others' groups for weak spots, usually a portent of mayhem to come.

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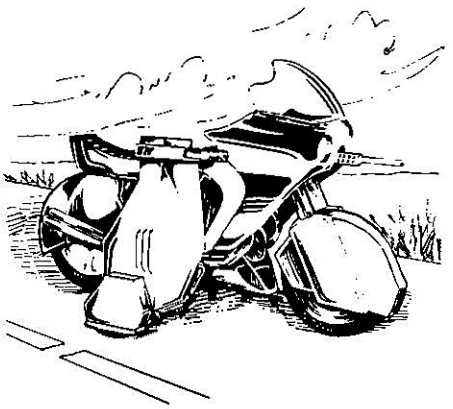

Car Wars PBM

Work on the *Car Wars* game program is coming along nicely. With luck, we'll start playtesting sometime after Thanksgiving. As it looks now, the game will really consist of four different but closely interrelated games (role-playing, vehicle design, arena combat, and open-road adventuring), and each player will be able to emphasize any or all of them, depending on his or her personal preferences.

The character system will allow players to develop and play characters with strongly individualized personalities. Open-road scenarios will create opportunities for solo and small-group adventures. Custom vehicle design and programming will provide a real test of creativity, tactical knowledge, and calculation (and a good livelihood) for those who wish to move beyond standard vehicles. And we expect the arena combat system to be the most realistic combat system in any PBM game, with accurate physics and with drivers and gunners using an anticipation capability derived from work on Artificial Intelligence.

Escape from Phantom Island

Design and programming have been going very quickly on this game, and it may well go into playtest before *Car Wars*. If *Illuminati* is "the most exotic game in PBM," as one player put it, *Escape* may soon give it some serious competition: The players are trapped in a fantastic, mysterious castle on a secret island. Escape artists must unravel a series of complex puzzles and solve the riddle of the doors. This will be an intensely cerebral game, and one which will put a premium on cooperation rather than conflict; few players will be able to succeed without help from others. If you like puzzles and you're interested in playtesting, drop us a line.

Clemens and Associates

Company News: We have finally finished the naval operations section of *Terra II*. The game is still oriented toward land-based operations, just as the real medieval period was land-based. Ships are used primarily to explore the coastline, locate islands, trade between cities, and move tribes to new continents for exploration or raiding. This new feature will open up a vast area which was previously inaccessible to the players.

Terra II

Northern Hemisphere: The trend to more peaceful activities has continued in the northern hemisphere. There are a few tribes, such as the Northern Eagle, which are still attacking their neighbors. Overall, however, the influence of the various alliances has brought about a period of relative calm. The major effort seems to have been shifted to economic development. There are many tribes conducting regular trade routes between the cities. As city prices adjust with supply and demand, these trade routes change as the cities become overloaded with certain goods. Those tribes depending on such trade will find the fluctuations more pronounced when naval trade routes become more well-known.

The response to the addition of naval operations to *Terra II* has been swift. Villages located on the seacoast are being established at a record pace. Many of the larger tribes, such as the American, have decided that the time is ripe to begin permanent camps. With this trend comes the risk of attack by more agressive tribes hoping to find an easy mark in the static villages. Several villages which were established in northern areas are being moved to new locations in the south.

While alliances are common throughout *Terra II*, most of the tribes are still unaligned. Many of these roam the plains north of Diwal, falling prey to the bandit tribes of the area. Perhaps that is why the Blue Eagle Explorers' map calls this area "the Wild Rabbit Prairie." The path to the more prosperous temperate areas south of Ecaio, Diwal, and Vinchu may be perilous. Some areas are becoming notorious for the risk in passing through them, with appropriate names being affixed by the various tribes: Death Passage, Blood Corridor, and Valley of Tears. The only advice one can give travellers is to move swiftly and maintain an alert defense.

Southern Hemisphere: As more players join *Terra II* due to recommendations from their friends, they do so with more care and planning. New tribes have been assigned to the south only by request. This has resulted in less than ten percent of the tribes starting in this hemisphere. Now, over half of the new tribes joining are requesting the southern hemisphere, so that they may avail themselves of the benefits of being in a less populated area.

Activity in the Wirka area has increased. There are wide-spread rumors that there is a group of islands to the east. The more prosperous tribes are active in building coastal villages in order to construct ships. They are quite aware of the security that comes with developing a sanctuary which cannot be reached by the tribes limited to land travel.

The Ewing and Tir Tairngire continue to explore the tropical regions. They seem to prefer the coast so they can avoid the jungle-covered hill and mountains. A potentially more profitable course of action is being followed by the Ultara leader.

Universe II

Quadrant I: The strong Ixtli fleet of the League of Commanders has reappeared again. They have taken over control of the star system Cor Serpentis from the Regajian governor. This peaceful transfer is the fourth in a series of transfers to provide greater security for the LOC/Cetusville group. The only response to date by the Unity Alliance is the challenge issued recently by the aging Dream-poet. The challenge may be answered, as the bulk of the Cetusville fleet has not been seen for weeks and may be located anywhere.

Quadrant II: The strong UES force which has been investigating the strength of the Xonu colony complex has finally departed. They seem satisfied that this traitorous base offers little threat to the growing power of the UES forces. The anticipated battle between the Ixtli/Unity forces and the loyal UES starships has failed to materialize. It is not clear who is the hunter and who the hunted.

Quadrant III: Activity around Hydrec has increased significantly in the past few weeks. As some of the newer starships build their fleets to rival the old, established alliances, conflict is very likely. The only factor reducing the threat of major battles is the reluctance of the established groups to venture far from their powerful colonial bases. Some of the senior alliances have built their colonies far from the regular trade lanes, and are rarely sighted by any rival starships.

Quadrant IV: The truce in the Hydra area has been shattered by a sneak attack on the starship UES RYCZ. It has taken heavy damage and will probably be destroyed. It is rumored that another powerful fleet has entered the quadrant and is making its way toward the arena. Reports did not include the affiliation of the fleet. Technical difficulties have prevented most of the Etuel systems from establishing defensive force fields. They must rely on the loyal UES starships for protection.

Quadrant XXI: A major battle seems likely between the growing forces of the Cetusville Alliance and the raiders of the Wanderers Alliance. Both sides have taken damage with no conclusion to the hostilities in sight. Seel is becoming a more popular trading center with the UES forces. Scattered reports have been received that the Regajian Empire is growing in strength. The number of ships and colonies in their area continues to increase as their recruitment efforts escalate.

Conquest of Insula II

Farraheim: The campaign for dominance on the island of Farraheim has been completed. The winner of the game is Brad Stuart, who was the Baron of Sol. He has now been advanced to the rank of Count and will participate in the next game of *Conquest of Insula II* free of charge. His victory came in the last few weeks of the campaign as he succeeded in destroying the village of Donnegal, and then wheeled his army around to intercept the Donnegal army as it returned to try to relieve the siege on the village. In second place was the Baron of Reaper who was unable to destroy the Wolf's Lair army after the village fell. In third place was the Baron of Donnegal.

Andarmark: This game in the series has ended with a victory by the baron of Kizyl-Kum. This enables the infamous Quinbus Flestrin to be elevated to the rank of Count,

and to play the next game free of charge. His victory came as a result of his successes in open-field combat as well as in siege operations. The Count of Devon came close to overtaking him as a result of the successful siege of the village of Moorlock.

Jiborokwi: The battles between the Baron of Barlona and the Baroness of Lorraine continue. At one point the walls of Lorraine were in a shambles, with defeat close at hand. A counter-attack by her army forced the army of the Baron of Barlona to retreat for reinforcements. Meanwhile, the village of Winslow has fallen to the assault force led by the Baron of Silton. The expected three-way battle was avoided when the Baron of Hallmark withdrew toward his village.

Gizzenole: The Barons of Pen and Rakshasa seem to have concluded their picnic in the plains. Meanwhile, the Baron of Falworth caught the army of the Baron of Krinstein in an ambush and routed them. The Baron of Mercia has mysteriously moved away from the village of Rakshasa without attacking. He missed a prime opportunity with the Rakshasa army far to the north. The Baron of Foggia is moving closer to the walls of Arvandor, with a siege likely.

Karandala: The Baron of Rosemount succeeded in his assault on the village of Detroit. His siege equipment broke a wide breach in the walls and his well-equipped warriors stormed into the village. Before the walls could be repaired, he launched another attack through the gap and the village fell. To the north, the Baron of Bardelik made one more attack on Heiston before withdrawing to his own village for reinforcements.

Raksharan: The campaign on this small, sub-arctic island has just started. It will be interesting to see if the experience of Garth Athrim, Count of Enderby, will enable him to win a swift victory. The barons of the other villages would do well to be vigilant. It is rumored that the Baron of El'et Sin has offered to send the Count a virgin each week if he will refrain from attacking.

—Empire Games, Inc.—

Company News: Basically, things continue to operate smoothly at Empire Games. Since the beginning of the year, we have consistently turned around city turns within nine days, and realm turns within two weeks. Our main thrust is still to build the number of city positions being played.

We have now filled all outstanding requests for realms in our original ***Realms of Sword and Thunder***, including the recycling of a few very old and experienced realms. The first *ROSAT* contest is also on, with all eligible players in a quest to save or destroy the sword Excalibur.

Realms of Sword and Thunder

Realms of Sword and Thunder is maturing nicely, as older players establish political connections within the various noble houses, and become strong enough to call attention to themselves. Several players have become economic powerhouses, and we are beginning to see power struggles and battles between players and alliances. The Order of Grey is becoming fairly well known, as is the expansionist inventor of the Aerocycle. At least one realm has become enough of a merchant prince to dry up local opportunities for other traders.

The Vampire Lands have suffered a bloody nose. The realm of Calimith was able to marshal enough support to break the siege it was under for more than a month. It is still believed that a vampire was personally directing that attack. Another player-realm apparently missed a chance to capture the sorcerer Klenmarx, an old foe of the Vampire King, allowing him instead to attack the besieging Vampire forces from behind.

Players in the cities are rapidly discovering the tangled webs formed by the power structures there, and we have seen some pretty creative use of the resources available to merchants, priests, and soldiers within a 5th-century city. In Asgarden, the thief Crassus led a brief and bloody guild war, taking control of that guild. He appears to have made a deal with city officials, avoiding the predicted political fallout after bringing violence into the city streets.

Some players are on the verge of discovering how to use the higher levels of power available to priests and sorcerers. We received one report of an apparition of a deity at the dedication of an altar, which resulted in the priest/leader being eaten.

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Where We're Going
by Steve Jackson

I closed my last column with a promise that this month I would reveal what *GURPS* really stands for. Well, I will. In a little while. You get to read the rest of the column first. As it happens, I have a couple of other things to talk about.

Upcoming Releases

Hard though it may be to believe, we get more organized around here all the time. (Example: as of October 1, this is Steve Jackson Games *Incorporated*. Don't rush out to your brokers to buy stock, though . . . it's limited to employees only. Sorry about that.) Anyway, we already have a schedule of releases running through 1985. That wouldn't be any big deal at Mammoth Overkill Games, but it's new for us.

The big part of the schedule, of course, is *GURPS*, which is now set for a pre-Origins — i.e., early June — release. The basic *GURPS* box will be followed fairly quickly by some supplementary material. Other upcoming releases will include:

Car Wars Expansion Set 6, a set of color-them-yourself counter sheets with *all* the vehicles from the *AADA Vehicle Guide*. Each counter is backprinted with a wrecked version of that vehicle. This set is out right now.

Convoy, the long-awaited *Car Wars* adventure. It can be played solo or in a group, with or without a referee. This one ought to be on the shelves within a couple of weeks of the time you get this magazine.

Car Wars Expansion Set 7, with off-road rules/maps/counters.

At least one more *Car Wars* adventure book like *Convoy*.

Illuminati Expansion Set 3. For a change, this one will *not* include cards — but it *will* include a gameboard. When we say expansion, we *mean* expansion!

Killer, in an enlarged edition. It's been out of print for months, and we keep getting requests, so we'll beef it up and bring it back.

At least one scenario package for ***Ogre***. It won't be like ***Shockwave*** — not exactly. It will have few if any new *rules*, but lots of scenarios and a (probably) large-sized map.

Big Games?

Something that isn't on the schedule yet — but may be someday — is deluxe versions of our better-selling games. We'd all *like* to do large-scale editions of ***Ogre***, ***Illuminati***, and/or ***Car Wars*** . . . both to get into new markets, and to offer a classier version to existing fans. Probably not 1985, but maybe 1986. What do *you* think?

Computer Update

Origin Software continues to plug away at their versions of our games. As of this writing (Oct. 15), ***Autoduel*** for the Apple II is the farthest along; we already have a playtest version running. ***Ogre*** for the Macintosh has been stalled — "one problem after another" — but preliminary screen dumps look good. The sticking point now is the artificial-intelligence routine that will play the Ogre (or the defender); it has to be good. Finally, the long-dormant ***Undead*** Apple II project is about to be revived.

Meanwhile, Adventure Systems' ***Illuminati*** PBM is going well — 12 games running now, and getting good reviews. Work has already started on their *Car Wars* PBM, but it will probably be around March before the game is in full swing.

Back Issues

It has been a long time since back issues of *SG* were available. That situation has now been rectified. Lou Zocchi, of Gamescience (01956 Pass Road, Gulfport, MS 39501) bought our entire stock of back issues and is now offering them for sale. Write Lou for more details.

GURPS

I guess I can't get away with prolonging the suspense any longer. What *GURPS really* stands for is . . . "*Generic Universal Role Playing System.*"

Ever since the project started, more years ago than I like to admit, the goal has been to do a system complete enough and detailed enough to let you simulate *any* background, real or fictional. And, furthermore, to keep the rules consistent enough that you could move characters freely between worlds. (What happens to your sword-swinging barbarian when he tangles with phasers is his own problem.)

Several companies, including one *big* one, have already released so-called "universal" systems. I don't think they'll be much in the way of competition. We have one that's no more than reworked ***D&D***, and another that requires you to make too many changes — to basic rules and to character stats — when going from one game-world to another. Hero Games has the closest thing going, and they've got a ways to go yet (though they may make it someday!). There's still *lots* of room for a good universal system. I think *GURPS* will be it.

If so, it will be the last RPG I ever design . . . because there won't be any reason to do another. Big words? We'll see.

So . . . what will *GURPS* cover?

Everything.

The basic set will emphasize fantasy — because that's what the majority of roleplayers still enjoy, and because hack-and-slash weapons are basic to *any* combat situation anyway. But it will contain enough information to let you set up *any* sort of campaign background. And within a year, we'll have specific, detailed supplements to cover superheroes, the *Car Wars* world, and science fiction. Each supplement will include at least one adventure; separate adventures will also be available.

As far as format goes, we're planning an original set like you wanted for ***TFT*** and never got: a large-sized box with several booklets and other components. (Don't hold me to this, but we may even be able to include dice.) Later supplements will be 8½" x 11" books, with size depending on price. We may punch everything for 3-hole binder, depending on feedback.

Feedback? You bet. Here's your chance to tell us what you want *GURPS* to be. Please complete the *GURPS* Feedback section on the bind-in card and mail it in. *GURPS* is going to be a very big project for us — the biggest we've ever taken on. So we want to get *everything* right. □

Counter Intelligence
by Warren Spector

Changes, Changes, and More Changes

If you've been with us for a while, you've seen *Space Gamer* go through countless changes: from digest size to full size; from non-glossy to glossy paper; from black-and-white interiors to color; from a magazine covering all of gaming to one covering just high-tech gaming. As somebody once said, the only constant around here is change.

Welcome to the latest round of changes.

The most obvious difference is our nifty new cover logo, but that's just the beginning. In addition, we're back on non-slick paper, just like the old days. And with this issue, *Space Gamer* (now incorporating *Fantasy Gamer*) returns to covering *all* of gaming — high-tech, low-tech, and no-tech.

And that's not all. We've added the incredibly prolific Jerry Epperson to the list of Contributing Editors. Also, we've got a new artist working on Murphy's Rules — Michael von Glahn. Mr. von Glahn is filling in for long-time Murphy's artist, Ben Sargent, resident Pulitzer Prize-winner (no kidding!). Ben is trying his hand at a regular comic strip, and for now he just doesn't have the time to do Murphy's. Our loss, but maybe soon we'll be able to enjoy Sargent's inimitable style every day in our local newspapers!

You say you want still more changes? Beginning next issue, Counter Intelligence takes on a new look. It will continue to be a forum for discussing developments here at *Space Gamer*, but I'd like it to be something more. Counter Intelligence is going to be the *SG* editorial page, examining issues of importance to gamers. I'd have to be nuts to think I'm the only one with anything worthwhile to say about the wide world of gaming, so from now on Counter Intelligence will feature opinions from a wide variety of sources. You'll hear plenty from me, from other SJ Games staffers, from employees of our competitors . . . even, on occasion, from readers. It should get pretty exciting. Next issue, *SG* Assistant Editor, Allen Varney, kicks off the new improved Counter Intelligence with a thoughtful look at the "State of the Art" in roleplaying.

PBM Update Update

Our recent reader survey shows an almost overwhelming lack of interest in the PBM Update column. Actually, that's something of an oversimplification: A few of you really love the column. Lots of you *hate* it. Some of you fall right in the middle, indicating you really don't care. With the proliferation of quality publications devoted entirely to play-by-mail games, we figure it's time to let PBM Update go away. Those of you who are interested can continue to follow developments in the various PBM worlds in the pages of *Paper Mayhem, Flagship,* and *Gaming Universal.*

Paradoxically, the same reader survey tells us you really like Keeping Posted — yeah, it confused us too! — so we'll continue to bring you PBM reviews and strategy articles on a regular basis.

Kudos

Each year, *Games* magazine selects the top 100 games. This year's list, found in the November 1984 issue, features two Steve Jackson Games products — ***Illuminati*** and ***Necromancer***. ***Illuminati*** is a perennial, one of SJ Games' most popular releases. ***Necromancer*** is a bit of a sleeper; we're pleased it's beginning to receive the attention it deserves. ***Illuminati*** sells for $6.95. ***Necromancer*** is a steal at $4.95. Both games can be ordered direct from Steve Jackson Games, but remember to add 55 cents apiece to cover postage and handling.

Prize Winners!

In *Fantasy Gamer* 6 we said we'd select five Reader Survey responses at random and give each of those lucky respondents a $15.00 gift certificate good for any Steve Jackson Games products (including magazine subscriptions). Here are the winners:

T. Constantine of Bangor, Maine; Rick Martin of Dayton, Ohio; John C. Duchon of Marlborough, Connecticut; Milo B. Shiff of Balboa, California; and Dale E. Burroughs of Tampa, Florida.

Tekumel

This issue's Tekumel section came about through the effort of several people, most notably Frederick Paul Kiesche III (who had no idea what he was getting himself into when he volunteered to take on the job!). Thanks also to Michael Mornard of Tekumel Games, and, of course, to Professor M.A.R. Barker, creator of Tekumel, ***Empire of the Petal Throne***, and ***Swords & Glory***.

Oops, We Goofed!

Every once in a while we like to prove we're human, so we make a couple of mistakes. This time, I was the culprit. In my ***Lords of Creation*** review (*Fantasy Gamer* 6), I said basic character attributes are determined by rolling 2d20. That should have read 2d10. I also said the game cost $25.00 (and was worth that price). Well, ***Lords of Creation*** sells for a measly $12.00. At that price, it's a bargain.

Coming Attractions

There aren't many game designers around who qualify as household names (even in the limited universe of gamers). Greg Costikyan is one of the few. He's made a name for himself with designs like ***The Creature That Ate Sheboygan, Bug-Eyed Monsters, Trailblazer,*** and many more. *Space Gamer* 72 features an interview with Greg and reviews of his latest efforts — ***Paranoia*** and ***Web & Starship*** from West End Games, and ***TOON*** from Steve Jackson Games.

In addition, *SG* 72 will take you from Middle-earth to the ***Traveller*** universe in overviews of Iron Crown Enterprises' Middle-earth RPG adventure modules and Gamelords' ***Traveller*** supplements.

Ed Morris in *Powers & Perils* — is it really Frank Frazetta?

Letters

George Schubel Responds

I have read your "Keeping Posted: A Gentle Art" [*Space Gamer* 69]. I believe it was well-balanced and well-written. Thank you for the fair treatment. I hope you will mention to your readers that Schubel & Son no longer owns ***StarMaster***: it has been sold to Mr. Richard Lloyd, who will be running the game in the future. Schubel & Son will operate a totally revised game, ***StarMaster II***. This game will have all record-keeping computerized, which should reduce errors.

I certainly agree with you that there should be a play-by-mail award.

Sincerely yours,
George V. Schubel
President, Schubel & Son

Anyone Else Find This Silly?

The Avalon Hill Game Company has recently reached an agreement with Avalon Industries, Inc., in settlement of litigation over the use of certain tradenames.

Please be advised that from this date forward, every reference to The Avalon Hill Game Company in your publication MUST be stated as "The Avalon Hill Game Company" and nothing else. It is important that the definite article "The" precede the words "Avalon Hill Game Company." Any deviation from the full phrase "The Avalon Hill Game Company" or any use of the word "Avalon" other than as part of the full phrase "The Avalon Hill Game Company" is improper and may result in further litigation.

Please help us and yourself avoid any liability for improper use of The Avalon Hill Game Company's trade name.

Any inquiries regarding this matter should be directed to A. Eric Dott, President of The Avalon Hill Game Company.

Sincerely yours,
A. Eric Dott

P&P Plagiarism?

I recently purchased a copy of Avalon Hill's new roleplaying game ***Powers & Perils***; though the game reads like ***DragonQuest*** translated into Sanskrit, that's not why I'm writing this letter. The real problem is that some of the artists that provided artwork for the game copied their artwork from the works of Frank Frazetta.

Such theft has happened before in the industry, but never to such a company as Avalon Hill. My guess is that the art director was asleep at the wheel and the artists pulled a fast one; but however it happened, it leaves Avalon Hill in the uncomfortable position of having purchased "stolen" artwork.

Ah, at this point you probably want proof. Well, for starters, the copies which I provided should make clear the most blatant example of the theft, perpetrated by Stephanie Czech. Exhibit A is a copy of the illustration on page 33, Book 4 of ***Powers & Perils***. Exhibit B is a copy of the frontispiece of *Frank Frazetta Book Two*; the same illustration also appears as Plate 79 in the same book. Do you notice a resemblance between the two horses? The riders are different, you say? Look at Exhibit C, Plate 60 from the same Frazetta book. Any similarities beween the pose, costume, and shading may be coincidence.

The rip-offs don't stop there. One of the other artists, Ed Morris, swiped many figures from all four of the Frazetta artwork books. The figures are usually "flopped" (reversed right-to-left), but they're all easily identifiable. The copies use the same pose, positioning of the figure, and shading of the muscles; some even conceal parts of the figure that weren't shown in the Frazetta original. I guess with no sample to work from, Morris couldn't draw in the rest. Here's a partial list of the obvious copies found, all by Ed Morris.

Powers & Perils (Page, Book)	Frazetta (Title, Plate Number, Book)
Page 14, Book One	"The Moonmaid," 48, Book 2

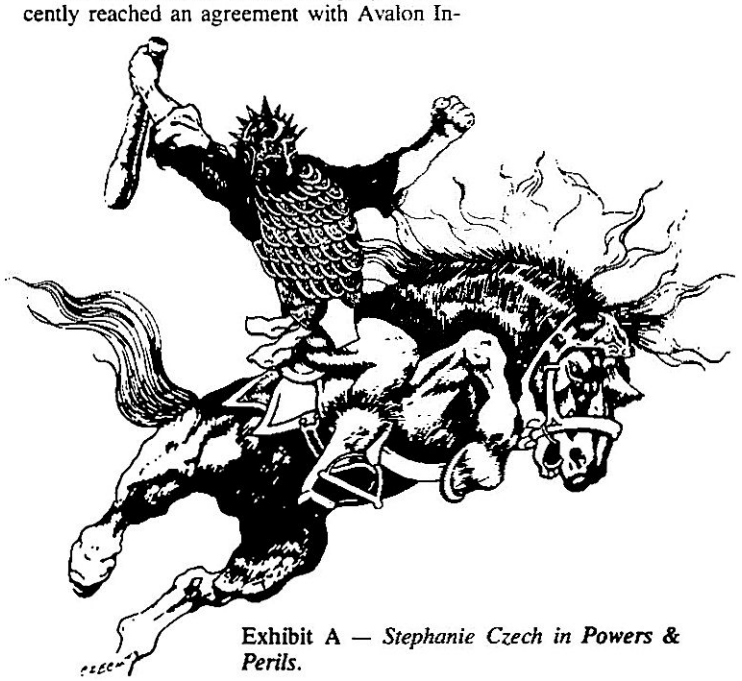

Exhibit A — *Stephanie Czech in Powers & Perils.*

Exhibit B — *Frazetta.*

Exhibit C — *Frazetta.*

Page 20, Book One	"Jongar Fights Back," 44, Book 2
Page 5, Book Two	"Black Panther," 77, Book 3
Page 9, Book Two	"Kublai Khan," from portfolio, Book 3
Page 36, Book Two	"Tree of Death," 88, Book 4
Page 34, Book Three	"The Snow Giants," 17, Book 1

If you have a copy of the Frazetta books handy, and a copy of ***Powers & Perils***, you can see the resemblances for yourself.

Why is this artwork copying such a crime? Well, these artists are violating the copyrights for Mr. Frazetta's work. More importantly, they're deceiving Avalon Hill into thinking that these are original pieces of art, which is fraud. Now, artists should use visual references, and artists should certainly study the technique of experts. But artists should not take those drawings by the experts, lay them down on a light table, and trace them. That's very unethical, not to mention illegal.

I hope that this example will make all the companies in the gaming industry look a little more closely at their artwork submissions. This trick has been played by unscrupulous artists before, and no doubt will be again. I hope Avalon Hill takes appropriate action: at the very least, an apology to Mr. Frazetta, and perhaps getting its money back from the artists.

Steve Peterson
Art Director
Hero Games

Willie the Wimp vs. Son of Conan

Space Gamer just keeps getting better. I especially enjoyed *SG* #69 and I would like to make a few comments.

In an otherwise excellent SFRPG review article, William A. Barton makes the following statement: "I'm not a big fan of character generation systems based on . . . a pre-set number of points. (After all, how many of you out there had any say in how strong, intelligent or dexterous you are . . .?)" Mr. Barton implies that gaming should duplicate real life. I can't buy that at all. First, gaming should be fair, which real life isn't. Neither is random character generation. How much fairness or enjoyment is there for an honest *and* unlucky player who randomly generates Willie the Wimp, while the player sitting next to him is lucky *or* dishonest enough to create Son of Conan or Indiana Jones? How can his PC compete? Success in RPGs should be based primarily on playing skill, not luck in dice-rolling. The latter belongs more in casinos and witless family games.

Also, real life is all too often, and for all too many of us, mediocre. The point of gaming is to escape this dullness, not to embrace it. Players want PCs who are colorful and "bigger-than-life," not copies of Joe Blow down the block. Otherwise, why bother gaming at all? Fixed-point design is superior to random generation in both fairness and satisfactory starting characters. You can't blame the dice when your PC fares poorly compared to the others.

In response to Mr. Cobb's brilliant algorithm for ***Ogre*** armor costs, I have two observations. First, applying the algorithm to the Chi Cub unit of "The Lone G.E.V." scenario (*SG* #52) gives a cost of 9VP, or 1½ armor units. This is more in line with my gut feeling about the Chi Cub than the 2-armor-unit cost originally given. Second, the algorithm works for infantry if you set T equal to zero and divide by 2.5 instead of 5.5.

James Albright
El Centro, CA

Parent-Child Update

Now that you have published [my article] "Parent-Child Gaming" [*Fantasy Gamer* 5], I need to comment on the presentation.

First, my story was in error in reporting Gamma Two was "extinct." The company just changed its name to Columbia Games and now can be reached at Box 8006, Blaine, Washington, 98230. ***Quebec*** and ***War of 1812***, originally produced by Gamma Two, may be purchased at $20 each by mail. The story was written many months before it appeared in print. At the time of the writing, I had been told Gamma Two was no more.

My wife suspects Allen Varney [illustrator of the article] has some children in his neighborhood but has no children of his own. Her suspicion is based on the fact that the boy in the art had cowlicks in his hair and a hole in his jeans, but his shirt was tucked in and his shoes tied. While little boys seldom have combed hair or intact jeans, I know of no little boys whose shirts are tucked in and whose shoes are tied (there was an unconfirmed sighting of such a thing at a school in Laramie, Wyoming . . .).

A few updates since "Parent-Child Gaming" was written. If your kid enjoyed ***Oregon Trail***, he'll love Avalon Hill's ***Source of the Nile***. It has more luck factors than ***Oregon Trail*** but also a greater variety of possible events and adventures. Let me strongly recommend GDW's ***The Brotherhood***, the company's gangster game. It's by John Hill, the designer of ***Squad Leader***, but is easy to play, lots of fun, and has a ton of strategy. It made the *Games 100* list and deserved to.

Finally, if parents are looking for a word game, I strongly recommend Eon's ***Runes***. Don't be put off this game just because you or your child is really strong or weak in ***Scrabble***. ***Runes*** seems to require a different, more subtle kind of word knowledge. I regularly beat Danny in ***Scrabble***, while he dusts me in ***Runes***. My mother-in-law admits she's a weak ***Scrabble*** player but plays a strong ***Runes*** game. ***Runes*** is a fine word game teachers might want to use in schools.

Steve LaPrade
Norman, OK

A Potential Contributor

I don't mean to be lazy, but what in the world is your magazine about? I really didn't feel up to reading any of that small type, but I did read a couple of your interesting stories. Are you trying to start a new kind of magazine or video game program? My eyes hurt from reading the small print, and I think that a pica typewriter would do much better typing.

In the future, I plan to write a book. I've written a couple of short stories. Yes, space stories, too. I've written more ghost stories than space stories. What I would like to know is if you'd like to read one and tell me what you think. Now, if you want to know my opinion on your stories, I'll tell you they're really strange!

Please write back or something to tell me what your book is about, and if you want me to send you one of the stories I'd written recently. They're only about ten to fifteen minutes long.

Signed,
Sean Saunders
Detroit, Mich

P.S. I don't want to subscribe at this particular moment. Thank you.

Feudal Lords

The original medieval pbm game of economic development, military conquest, and political intrigue.

Feudal Lords is a computer-moderated play-by-mail strategic game of power politics set in Arthurian England.

Each player is the lord of a medieval fiefdom seeking to become King against up to 14 other players and over 30 non-player lords controlled by the computer. To accomplish this task, a player may select from over 30 types of military, economic, and diplomatic orders each turn.

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— Rated one of the four best pbm games as reviewed in issue #72 of the ***Dragon*** *magazine!*

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ENTRY: $10.00 for the rulebook, set-up, and first 3 turns; $2.50 per turn.
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Capsule Reviews

Space Gamer reviews boardgames, roleplaying games, computer games, play aids, publications, and game supplements. We review play-by-mail games if a reviewer is enrolled. We will attempt to review any science fiction or fantasy game if the publisher supplies a copy. We do not guarantee reviews of historical games. *Space Gamer* may publish a review of a game we are not sent — if a reader submits a review.

The staff will make reasonable efforts to check reviews for factual accuracy, but opinions expressed by reviewers are not necessarily those of the magazine.

Games and game items for which we are seeking reviews include ***Battlebikes, Battlestar Galactica, Crasimoff's World (PBM), Crypt of Medea, Death House, Encyclopedia Harnica 3-8, The Iron Wind, The Last Starfighter Combat Game, The Last Starfighter: Duel in Space, Operation Guardian, Partisans from the Shadows, Plague of Terror, Ravensgate, RHAND, Shadowland, Space Race, Starship Captain, Star Trek III Starship Combat Game, Streets of Gems, Tarantis, Vengeance of Dracula, Village of Peddler's Ferry***, and ***Wizard's Realm***.

GAMES

SAMURAI BLADES (Standard Games and Publications; distributed in US by Wargames, 1410 Promenade Bank Center, Richardson, TX 75080); $18. Designed by Peter O'Toole. One 17-page 6¾" x 8¼" historical background book, 3 8½" x 11¼" cardboard Play Sheets, 220 counters, two 15¾" x 22" map sheets, one 20-sided die. For two players; playing time 30 minutes to 2 hours. Published 1984.

Samurai Blades is a simple, fun-to-play boardgame of man-to-man combat in feudal Japan. The rules are short and easily learned; the components are beautiful. Action is fast and furious. Good strategy results in immediate, bloody contact between the opposing sides which can continue unabated for an hour or more; bad strategy results in a quick slaughter — a flurry of arrows, some severed heads, and it's over. Just like that. The game system itself is simple in the extreme. Each character has an attack strength, defensive strength, and a movement factor. To attack, compare attack strength to the defender's defense strength, roll a die (included with the game), and check the appropriate chart. There are charts for mounted units, infantry, monks, and samurai. Terrain offers cover and various pluses and minuses. Missile combat is handled nicely through another set of charts. Anyone who's played any sort of wargame will find no surprises in ***Samurai Blades***. To make combat (and movement, and everything else) even simpler, Standard Games includes a Player Sheet which brings all the charts necessary to play the game together on a single sheet of paper.

The most impressive thing about the game is its components — two large maps, one depicting a peasant town and surrounding fields, the other including some peasant huts, a river, a bridge, and a temple. The maps are lovely and feel like they'll be around long after the purchaser shuffles off this mortal coil. The game includes *lots* of ¾" counters. The large size makes the counters easy to move around and there's plenty of room for art. That room is used to great advantage — these are the most detailed counters (and the bloodiest) you're likely to find. Each character is unique, adding a roleplaying dimension to the game most boardgames lack. Adding to the feeling that you're actually on the field of battle is the fact that each character is represented by two counters — one depicts the healthy character on one side and the stunned character on the other; the second counter shows the character wounded and dead. When these characters get whittled away, you get to see the action in gory detail. Big fun!

Samurai Blades is a terrific sake-and-rice-cakes game, but it isn't perfect. The rules are so simple they leave many questions unanswered. If two characters combine their attacks and the result is "Attacker Wounded," which character takes the wound? There are several partial hexes on the maps (because buildings and terrain features aren't lined up with hex edges); do these partial hexes count as full hexes for purposes of movement and retreat? And it's nearly impossible to tell which hexes are adjacent to windows in the buildings depicted on the maps. The biggest problem, however, is that several of the scenarios could have used some more playtesting. Scenario balance ranges from pitiful (with one side wiped out in moments) to perfect (with the outcome in doubt until the last blow of the last turn!). Play the scenarios in the book once and then junk them in favor of your own.

The bottom line on ***Samurai Blades***, is, well, confused. The rules are skimpy and some of the scenarios are terrible. But if you're willing to make up rules as you go along, and write your own scenarios, ***Samurai Blades*** could be just your cup of tea. The game really captures the flavor of all those Toshiro Mifune films; it's a heck of a lot of fun to play and doesn't take a long time; and *boy*, is it bloody! Death is personal, immediate, and painful. Nothing abstract about it. There's even a hint of magic in the game in the form of skulking ninja and monks with wondrous abilities. A strangely appealing game, one I expect I'll be playing regularly for some time to come.

—Warren Spector

CITY OF SORCERERS (Standard Games and Publications, Ltd.; distributed in US by Wargames, 1410 Promenade Bank Center, Richardson, TX 75080); $18. Designed by Alan Paull. 16" x 22" color vinyl mapsheet, four 8" x 10" color vinyl Arena boards, 169 punch-out cards, one sheet large cardboard terrain counters, 65 ½" color counters, 11" x 17" chart sheet, 16-page rulebook, two dice, boxed. For two to four players; playing time two to four hours. Published 1983.

Best described by its box-cover copy, "***City of Sorcerers*** is a fantasy boardgame for two to four players in which apprentice wizards struggle to gain the powers that will help them to claim sorcerer status — a claim which must be confirmed in the Sorcerers' Arena. There are two parts to the game. During the first part, the apprentices travel around the city researching spells which will help them in the Arena . . . In the second part the wizards will enter the Arena and use their powers to attempt to locate and eliminate all rival wizards." The magic research involves drawing "Knowledge" and "Fate" cards, manufacturing Artifacts, and accumulating Psychic Points and "Mystery Levels." Arena combat takes place on a field of 19 large hexes; terrain can be changed and monsters recruited.

Lots of attractive components (in a *large*, 12" x 17" box) make ***City of Sorcerers*** a treat for the eyes — and the wallet. You're getting a whole lot of *stuff* for your money! The game itself uses these components to best advantage, giving you lots of cards in the first half and letting you change terrain with carefree abandon in the second. The system rewards strategy — to an extent — and features several nice mechanics to keep the arena duel balanced even if one player scores big (or badly) during apprenticeship. There are plenty of interesting magic cards that lend variety to the contests.

I will say, though, that some components are less attractive than others: The cards and counters are pretty flimsy. Some rules ambiguities can hang you up, like the effects of rivers and exactly which monsters are water creatures. The game would benefit from fewer die-rolls and some provision, currently lacking, for trading cards between players. My principal complaint, though, is that the Arena game suffers, badly, if for any reason the wizards' apprenticeships fail to turn up an interesting bunch of spells and Artifacts. Without summoning spells, for example, you can't bring monsters to fight for you — and the game can become tedious.

But ***City of Sorcerers*** can be fascinating at times, and is often at least enjoyable. What we have here is a highly uneven design with considerable replay value: If one game doesn't turn out well, try again and it's bound to be different. It has lots of flavor and tries things I've never seen in other games. A qualified recommendation.

—Allen Varney

THUNDE-RIN GUNS, Game of the Wild West (Standard Games & Publications, Ltd.; distributed in the US by Wargames, 1410 Promenade Bank Center, Richardson, TX 75080); $18. Designed by Alan E. Paull. Ten-page rulebook, play sheet, 22" x 17" full-color map, full-color counters and markers, 2 dice. Playing time 1 to 2 hours. Published 1984.

Well, pardners, if you've got a-hankerin' for some rip-snortin' western action, this English game's for you. The oversized box, showing three desperadoes blasting away, promises much — and the components deliver. There are classy counters depicting outlaws, Indians, gunmen, townspeople, and other icons of the "Old West." There are also assorted (and attractive) markers for gold, dynamite, the trusty train, and the not-so-trusty stagecoach.

Players play the Outlaws, the Gunmen, and the Sheriff; each has a different victory condition. The Outlaws want gold, the gunmen seek Gunskill Points (guess how they get them?), and the Sheriff tries to stop the other two groups and win "Fame." Movement for a player's turn is based on a single die roll, with a horse giving an added three-space bonus. Combat is, appropriately, based on challenges between characters, with each character using his Gunskill rating and a single die roll on a simple Combat Results Table. In addition, winning a challenge adds Gunskill Points that help in future shootouts.

The game has its share of excitement. While the outlaws are trying to rob and the gunmen shoot

down the hapless townspeople, the Sheriff, aided by a feeble deputy, tries to recruit help from various groups. These can include miners, ranchers, Indians, and even the schoolmarm. The untimely arrival of a lucrative stagecoach or train brings added pressure on the forces of law and order. The Sheriff is under the gun, so to speak, as he tries to get help for a final showdown.

I liked this game. As is usual with Standard Games, each character's counter is a unique individual, with differing abilities. The map of the town and its environs is atmospheric and it's fun to play on. While strategy seems obvious at times (I mean, no matter what, the Sheriff has to get help), there are enough options to keep the game a close match. The rules are clear, simple, and have nice bits of business with exploding safes and the classic stagecoach robbery. This one's definitely worth, er, a shot.

—Matthew J. Costello

BATTLECARS (Games Workshop); $18. Designed by Ian Livingstone and Gary Chalk. Two-piece map board, 584 counters, 8 pedestrian and car damage record sheets, 4 player reference sheets, one 8-sided die, boxed. For two to four players; playing time 1 to 2 hours. Published 1983.

In the aftermath of such movies as *Mad Max* and *Road Warrior* comes ***Battlecars***, a game of automotive combat.

The year 2080 saw electric automobiles travelling along computer-controlled "Autoslot" roadways; automotive travel was almost perfectly safe and orderly. However, this did not appeal to some daredevils, who unearthed old gas-eating models from junkyards and abandoned garages. Finding stretches of deserted roads not fitted with "Autoslot," they started racing their finds. The first wreck increased attendance, as people were drawn to the violence of the racing. The drivers gave the public what they wanted, arming their vehicles to insure wrecks. The illegal sport gained popularity and an immense following, until by the year 2085 it was a national pastime, ignored by the law enforcement agencies.

Battlecars is played on a unique board: It is gridded with squares, and the squares are cross-lined diagonally. The intersection of square corners and diagonals is marked with a white dot. All movement and combat is done along the lines of the squares and diagonals, while the dots indicate terrain placement, weapon range, and auto movement distances.

Each player selects one of the four combat car displays, arms it, and sallys forth to do battle with the other cars. The car's movement rate is set at the beginning of the turn, subject to rules on acceleration and deceleration; the car must then move its set rate when the turn comes up. Cars may shoot at one another during their own movement or in returning the fire of an attacker during the attacker's turn. All fire must be along one of the lines (square/diagonal). Ammunition counters are removed from the weapon pod supply; damage counters mark armor and internal components damaged.

Battlecars is totally counter-based. Counters mark damage, indicate speed, note the weaponry in a pod or turret, and even make up the terrain! Grass counters, building counters, tree counters — all of the terrain is "portable," allowing a different board every game!

Battlecars has its good points: The movable terrain, the superb counters and components, the ease of learning the rules, even such technicalities as the possibility of losing control when you go through a smoke cloud.

Unfortunately, there are bad points, too: The players are limited to four actual vehicles, the only variations being what weaponry is installed; the lines restrict movement and weapon fire; rockets hit more easily than machine-guns, and damage from all weapons is attenuated by range; and lastly, the well-done cover illustration gives an erroneous impression. The cover seems to suggest a low-tech *Road Warrior*-type game, not the high-tech armament that actually exists in ***Battlecars***.

Battlecars is an admirable boardgame, a simple wargame. But compare its limited movement and combat, its scanty number of options in auto selection, and its price to the somewhat more-complex but free movement and combat and bewilderingly large vehicle selection (including design-your-owns) in ***Car Wars***, which retails for less than one-third the money. It's not likely that ***Battlecars*** is going to oust ***Car Wars*** for the number one position. However, if what you want is a simple, elegant game of auto-combat with a high price tag, then you might consider ***Battlecars***. I'll stay with ***Car Wars***.

—Craig Sheeley

STAR FLEET BATTLES VOLUME II (Task Force Games); $19.95 boxed set, $9.95 rulebook only. Designed by Stephen V. Cole. One 8" x 11" 96-page looseleaf book. Boxed set also includes 324 ½"-square counters and 32 pages of Ship System Display sheets. Any number of players, plus possible referee; playing time indefinite. Published 1984.

The second part of Task Force Games' ***Star Fleet Battles Commander's Edition*** is out, after a year's wait. The wait was well worth it, as TFG is slowly getting the rules of this game organized. All of the material that originally occupied three expansion sets is now set up in one package, without the superseding of rules from book to book.

New rules and ships have been added to the game that were not in the expansions. The new scout rules give more versatility to that class of ships, especially adding purpose for the "special sensors." The old rules have been revised and completed. Some scenarios have been changed to allow for material not yet present in the ***Commander's Edition*** — e.g., "The First of Its Kind" uses a Dreadnought instead of a Command Cruiser-X.

The main differences between the rulebook-only and the boxed editions are the additional counters and Ship System Display sheets. Two of the counter sheets are from former expansions; the new third counter sheet includes ships that have been released since the expansions. The SSD sheets contain all of the ships presented in ***Volume II***, in ship-only form. All this may be worth another ten dollars, considering that the new counter sheet alone costs two dollars from TFG.

Star Fleet Battles Volume II is not without its faults. Some pages do not interweave well with the first volume, especially the scenarios. The Master Ship Chart was done using a daisywheel printer or typewriter, unlike the photo-typesetting for the rest of the book. The typesetter managed in all places to use a slash (/) where a percent sign was to be used (%). One hopes these errors can be corrected with ***Volume III***.

For new ***Star Fleet Battles*** players, I recommend the boxed set for parts that you need. For converting players, get just the rulebook, but check your old material for needed parts.

—Philip L. Wing

LANDS OF ADVENTURE (FGU); $12. Designed by Lee Gold. One 8½" x 11" 28-page Culture Pack, one 8½" x 11" cardstock character sheet, two 6-sided and two 20-sided dice, boxed. Published 1984.

Lands of Adventure is a new FRPG designed by Lee Gold, creator of FGU's ***Land of the Rising Sun*** RPG. It is a modest, but by no means insignificant, effort compared to other recent, sometimes-excessive FRPG extravaganzas, consisting only of a brief 32-page rulebook and a "Culture Pack" for setting the game in either Mythic Greece or Medieval England. Character generation is somewhat complex — more so than ***RuneQuest*** or ***D&D***, but not so much as ***Bushido***. Eleven main characteristics and several secondary factors define characters. Of these, four are primary, rolled on a D20 — Craft, Talent, Appearance, and Strength. The others — Dexterity, Voice, Intelligence, Prudence, Agility, Constitution, Charisma — are based on averages of other characteristics and die rolls. Characters have basic skill percentages in general skill areas, such as Communication, Magic, Knowledge, and Weapons, plus a number of specific skills determined by the Prudence score. Skill levels are determined through formulas based on governing characteristics and the optional use of previous experience. Combat and magic use are relatively complex, though not so much as in systems like ***Chivalry and Sorcery***. The roll to hit, for example, is a simple percentage roll vs. weapon skill (with modifiers), though weapon damage is determined by several factors, such as a weapon's weight, family, and so on. The main book also offers "generic" fantasy rules on gods, animals, creatures, etc., while the Culture Packs give specifics for each culture examined.

Lands of Adventure features several good ideas. Extra characteristics such as Piety aid in developing characters for roleplaying purposes. The section on invoking deities, with their powers and miracles, is unique and well-conceived. Optional tables, such as "Atmospheric Effects During Spell Casting" and "Creating Deity Names," are nice touches, too. But it is the Culture Packs that put *LoA* above other recent FPRGs. The data covered in these would be of use to any GM who wishes to run games in these eras. The Medieval England pack, for example, includes information on the Old Religion not easily found elsewhere in gaming, plus useful information on Druidism as well.

LoA does exhibit problems. Character generation is a bit too complex for my taste, as are some mechanics, though others might not find this to be the case. Basing Intelligence on Craft and Talent, rather than vice versa, and Agility on Appearance strikes me as very odd. Leaving specific skills up to the GM, except for some examples, is not a good idea — skills that one GM might accept, others might not. Definite skill lists, perhaps with a "catchall" skill such as is found in other games, would have been better. And I wonder at the use of the Latin "Daemon" rather than the Greek "Daimon" in the Greek pack or the listing of Picts as nonhumans "like Faeries" in the England pack.

Still, for its Culture Packs alone, more of which are promised, ***Lands of Adventure*** might prove a good buy for any FRPGers who don't consider themselves experts on the specific cultures covered. As for the game itself, Lee Gold admits in the introduction that it isn't the perfect FRPG. But then, what is?

—William A. Barton

FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING (Iron Crown Enterprises); $25. Designed by Coleman Charlton. 21" x 26" mounted mapboard, 222 playing cards, 65 plastic playing pieces, 40 counters, 24-page rulebook, various charts and play-aids. Boxed. For two players; playing time 4 to 6 hours. Published 1983.

Gamers have been waiting for this for a long time. Tolkien's ***Lord of the Rings*** is the obvious inspiration for ***Dungeons & Dragons*** and arguably has provided source material for every fantasy game published since. SPI produced a ***Lord of the Rings*** boardgame a few years back, but many felt the system was too stiff and too simple for a world as complex as Middle-earth. Iron Crown has addressed this problem by focusing ***The Fellowship of the Ring*** on the first book of the trilogy, covering the period from the flight of the hobbits from the shire to the approach of the Fellowship to Mordor. The closer

the Fellowship Player gets to Mordor with the Ring (avoiding intervention from the Enemy Player along the way), the higher the level of victory. Presumably, future supplements from Iron Crown will pick up where ***Fellowship of the Ring*** leaves off.

The game components are superb. The mapboard (puzzle-cut and mounted) is beautifully rendered, painstakingly detailed, and a lot of fun to use; I've played the game a number of times and I'm still finding hidden routes and features I'd overlooked. Hidden movement is simulated with plastic markers (looking suspiciously like six-sided dice) allowing only the owning player to see the identifying face. There are 100 character and creature cards representing every major and minor figure from the book. The Ring is here, too, as well as 50 random event cards that may allow the Fellowship to locate friends, discover secret trails, or encounter Gollum.

Clearly a labor of love with remarkable detail, ***Fellowship of the Ring*** is a game you really want to root for. Sad to say, it doesn't quite come off. The combat system, for example, is essentially a die-rolling contest which really slows the game to a crawl when several characters are involved. Although the hidden movement system is clever, it's awkward to play, requiring constant cross-referencing from the numbered playing pieces to the ever-changing character card displays. Worst of all, somewhere along the line the "feel" of Tolkien's novels has been lost. ***Fellowship of the Ring*** is quickly reduced to a guessing game involving dozens of plastic cubes scattered across the board. It has more in common with an abstract wargame like ***Stratego*** than it does with the epic journey of the hobbits through Middle-earth.

This is not to fault the efforts of the designers. They've done an admirable job with a tough assignment. The truth may be that *Lord of the Rings* simply doesn't provide a very good premise for a two-player boardgame. A solitaire system allowing the Fellowship to find its way across the land, making discoveries and encountering resistance along the way, might be a better way to capture the adventurous feel of the books. (After all, given a choice, would any Tolkien fan really prefer to play the Enemy side?) In any case, in spite of the best intentions, ***Fellowship of the Ring*** is little more than a nice try.

—Rick Swan

CHILL: ADVENTURES INTO THE UNKNOWN (Pacesetter Ltd.); $12. Designed by Gali Sanchez, Garry Spiegle, Mark Acres, Ethan Sharp, and Michael Williams. One 8-page Introductory Folder, 16-page adventure, 64-page Campaign book and 32-page Horrors book, 21½" x 27" double-sided map, 140 die-cut counters, 3 10-sided dice, boxed. For referee and a variable number of players; playing time indefinite. Published 1984.

Following in the, er, *claw*-prints of Chaosium's ***Call of Cthulhu*** and Tri-Tac's ***Stalking the Night Fantastic*** is the newest entry in the modern supernatural fantasy RPG field, ***Chill: Adventures into the Unknown*** by Pacesetter Ltd., a relatively new company made up largely of several ex-TSRers. ***Chill*** is an impressive and professional first release for Pacesetter, and an excellent addition to the genre. Player-characters in the game are members of S.A.V.E., the Societas Albae Viae Eternitata (the Eternal Society of the White Way), a secret organization dedicated to fighting the darkness of the Unknown — similar to ***Stalking the Night Fantastic***'s Bureau 13, except that it's a private rather than a government group. They combat creepies as outlined in the Horrors from the Unknown book — vampires, werewolves, ghosts, and mummies, armed with knowledge, skills, and, if able, the disciplines of the Art ("white magic" as opposed to the "black magic" of the Evil Way). Character generation is straightforward, with the eight abilities of strength, dexterity, agility, willpower, personality, perception, stamina, and luck determined by a 3D10 + 20 roll. A D10 roll determines how many skill points a character may spend on skills from student to teacher level (one level per point). Skill percentages are based on abilities, plus level bonuses. Turn sequence, movement, combat, and various actions are all covered thoroughly, logically, and playably, as are damage determination and healing, plus extras such as animals, NPCs, and use of the Art.

Chill has a lot to commend it, not the least of which is the amount of material you get for the price: full-color world map, die-cut counters, battleboard, and rules. The game has several innovations in its mechanics. The ***Chill*** Action Table, used for specific checks of various actions, combat, fear, and so on, is simple and easy to use (as opposed to similar action-chart-based games such as ***James Bond 007***), yet gives surprisingly detailed results in a number of situations. The list of disciplines (spells) is quite extensive and covers most parapsychological phenomena in fantasy/horror literature, even though most are limited to use by the Unknown and not player-characters. And lots of nice touches, such as the S.A.V.E. timeline, excerpts from S.A.V.E. leader Michael O'Boylan's *Devices of the Enemy*, and liberal doses of black humor make the game fun just to read, too.

There are a few points about the game I'm not overly taken with: The Side A moves/fire/melees, then Side B, etc., turn sequence is one that seems more appropriate to a boardgame than a RPG; I much favor moving in order by DEX, etc., regardless of side. I don't think player-characters are allowed enough skills to start with — five student levels tops — though the method of determining skill percentages guarantees most will start with at least a 50+% in their skills; also, more can be learned later by spending Insight Points (i.e., experience points), so this isn't too bad. I'd also like

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(2) General description of the game: background, the sides, course of play, special features, etc.

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All reviews must be signed; the reviewer's name *will* be printed. No game may be reviewed by its designer, by a playtester, or by an employee of the publisher. (Designer's articles are welcome, but must be billed as such!) Final note: If you can write a complete review in less than the full 400 words, by all means do so.

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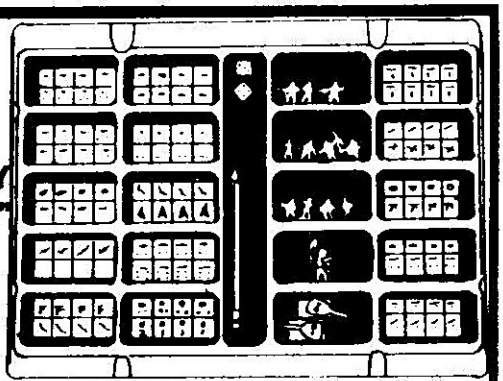

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to have seen more creatures in the basic game itself.

Still, *Chill* is a viable alternative in supernatural gaming for those who desire less gunplay than is typical in *Stalking* or prefer more conventional creatures than the sanity-blasting horrors of *CoC*.

—William A. Barton

SIEGE (Standard Games and Publications, Ltd.; distributed in the US by Wargames, 1410 Promenade Bank Center, Richardson, TX 75080); $18. Designed by Alan E. Paull. Two 16" x 22" maps, 89 counters, 4 reference sheets, rulebook, scenario book, historical background book, 6 castle record sheets, 20-sided die. For two players; playing time 1 to 3 hours. Published 1984.

Siege is a development of the game *Cry Havoc*, oriented toward the conquest of castles, a favorite activity in the 13th century. Complete (but not confusingly complex) rules and learning scenarios guide the players through basic combat, fighting in the castle, storming the castle, and finally besieging the castle. Rules on combat, missile fire (changed from *Cry Havoc*, by the way), storming ladders, siege towers, filling the moat, battering the walls, fire, panic . . . *Siege* is more complex than *Cry Havoc*, yet still an able companion game which stands on its own. The scenario book supplies five scenarios for *Siege*, and two mega-scenarios (practically campaigns) combining *Siege* and *Cry Havoc*.

Siege continues the high quality of its companion, *Cry Havoc*, with art-piece vinylized maps of a camp and a small castle, double-sided counters for every man (and animal) in the battle, counters for the siege gear, painted in loving detail . . . wonderful!

Like *Cry Havoc*, *Siege*'s counters are too thin for comfort. Be careful with them.

Siege is well worth the money. The scale fits any 25mm miniature figures, the maps are invaluable, and the rules about taking castles are *very* useful.

—Craig Sheeley

CRY HAVOC (Standard Games and Publications Ltd; distributed in the US by Wargames, 1410 Promenade Bank Center, Richardson, TX 75080); $18. Designer not credited. Two 16" x 22" maps, 228 counters, 4 reference sheets, rulebook, scenario book, historical background book, 20-sided die. Two (or more) players; playing time 30 minutes to 3 hours. Published 1983.

Cry Havoc is a game of man-to-man medieval warfare. The players select sides in a scenario and battle it out on a six-feet-to-a-hex map that corresponds to the scale of most miniatures. Hand-to-hand combat, missile combat, and movement are all covered in the rules, along with terrain effects. The playing pieces are individualized, each with a different-colored line picture of the individual, name, and state. All counters are backprinted, and combat results are tracked by flipping the counters over, simplifying record-keeping. The scenario book provides seven scenarios, ranging from small encounters to large-scale battles; the historical background book explains some of the history behind the pieces (a complete background would require a large book on the 13th century). Optional rules on bow ammunition, command control, and ransoming nobility round out the game.

Cry Havoc is an outstanding game. The rules are easily learned and played, the vinylized maps are works of art, and the playing pieces are beautiful and widely varied.

There is one flaw to the game: I could wish that the counters were a tad more substantial; as it is, they're kind of thin.

Cry Havoc is superb, a wonderful thumbnail sketch of medieval combat. Gamers interested in FRPGs will find it a useful aid, especially the maps.

—Craig Sheeley

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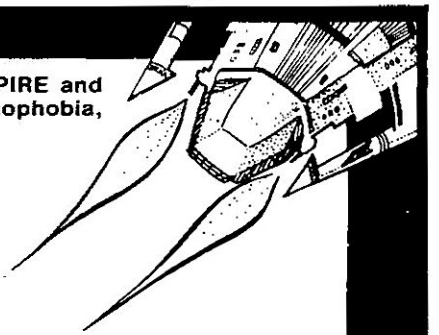

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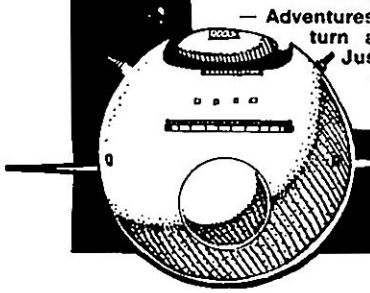

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STAR TREK II: STARSHIP COMBAT SIMULATOR (FASA); $12. Designed by David F. Tepool, Jordan Weisman, and Wm. John Wheeler. Boxed set with five 8½" x 11" booklets (8, 24, 16, 16, and 4 pages, respectively), 34" x 22' Starfield Mapsheet, 78 Starship Silhouette Counters, and 112 Display Counters. For two to 12 players; playing time indefinite. Published 1984.

Star Trek II is, quite simply, a starship combat simulation. It provides four games, the Basic, Advanced, and Expert Starship Tactics (in order of complexity) and "Command & Control," a roleplaying system. The rules are in the first two books, the starship data in the third, the various panels necessary in the fourth, and an introduction to starship combat in the fifth. The system given is basically that which FASA uses for ***Star Trek — The Role-Playing Game***, although there are some differences within each system from the "original." Combat can take place between teams of players or under the supervision of an "instructor."

This system is of use mostly to players of the ***Star Trek*** RPG. It provides a new mapfield, new counters for the ships, more display counters, and new, better-looking panels. The systems given provide many variations which can be incorporated into the roleplaying starship combat sequence with no difficulty whatever. The "Introduction to Starship Combat" booklet (Book 5) is mostly two highly entertaining narratives, one dealing with Kirk's passing of the *Kobyashi Maru* scenario during his cadet days.

There are many flaws, however. Ship design is impossible using just these rules; you also need the ***Starship Construction Manual***. If the ***Manual*** isn't bought, players must be resigned to playing with the twenty ships given. The Tholians are totally excluded. What happens if ships at different warp speeds engage in battle is never described, except in passing. It is never explained where the "Combat Systems Shaken" chart is used. Roleplaying is more of the ***Car Wars*** variety than the ***D&D*** type: Characters have only their skills in areas relevant to starship combat.

While I would recommend the game to anyone who owns the roleplaying version of ***Star Trek***, it is *not* the best fleet tactics or one-on-one starship battle system on the market today. Its best use is to enhance the starship combat system in the RPG, and this it does excellently.

—Steve Crow

THE SEARCH FOR SPOCK (FASA); $6. Designed by David F. Tepool and William Cardwell. One 32-page rule booklet, 76 Event Cards, 112 playing pieces, 7 modular map hexes, 3 dice, boxed. For one to four players; playing time up to one hour. Published 1984.

In this, one of FASA's new minigames, each player takes a Federation or Klingon character and lands on the Genesis Planet to recover young Spock before the planet can disintegrate into random atoms. As the characters go from site to site, trying to locate the missing Vulcan and fending off attacks by "vicious life forms created by the Genesis Effect," they must also contend with a host of natural hazards, then make it back to their beam-up point for recovery by their ship.

The Search for Spock is a quick, easy-to-learn game of survival on a hostile planet as the players fight against time to complete their mission. Combat is fast-moving, if overly simplistic. Federation and Klingon characters from the *Star Trek III* movie are provided, along with a system for the players to generate their own characters. The game works best solitaire, but can be played with up to four: two Federation (Kirk and Saavik) and two Klingon (Kruge and Krimm), all competing against each other.

However, the bad points of this game far outweigh the good ones. Rules are poorly explained at points, especially concerning placement of markers and creation of rubble. Advanced solitaire games can end quite rapidly when a player loses a tricorder (preventing him from beaming back to his ship) during a planetquake. And the "vicious life forms" mentioned on the back of the box consist of just the enlarged microbes and the Klingon pet, nothing else. The two life forms possess almost identical statistics and can appear any number of times (at least four apiece) in a given game. And the rules as written can be easily abused, as one can go to a site where Spock might be, step outside it for one turn, then return and check it again, then step out, return, step out, etc. This option gives the same chance of finding Spock as trekking halfway across the map! Unless this is ignored, the game is no challenge at all.

The only reason you might wish to buy this is if you have some extra money to spend and are looking for a solitaire game. Vague rules make the game extremely difficult to play in spots and the frustration level is high. If you wish to buy ***The Search for Spock***, be prepared to do some tinkering to make it challenging, yet survivable.

—Steve Crow

STRUGGLE FOR THE THRONE (FASA); $6. Designed by David Tepool and Jordan Weisman. 7-piece modular board, 112 counters, 76 action cards, 2 six-sided dice, 31-page rulebook, boxed. For two to six players; playing time 1 to 3 hours. Published 1984.

Struggle for the Throne is a strategy game based on FASA's *Star Trek III* license. The Klingon

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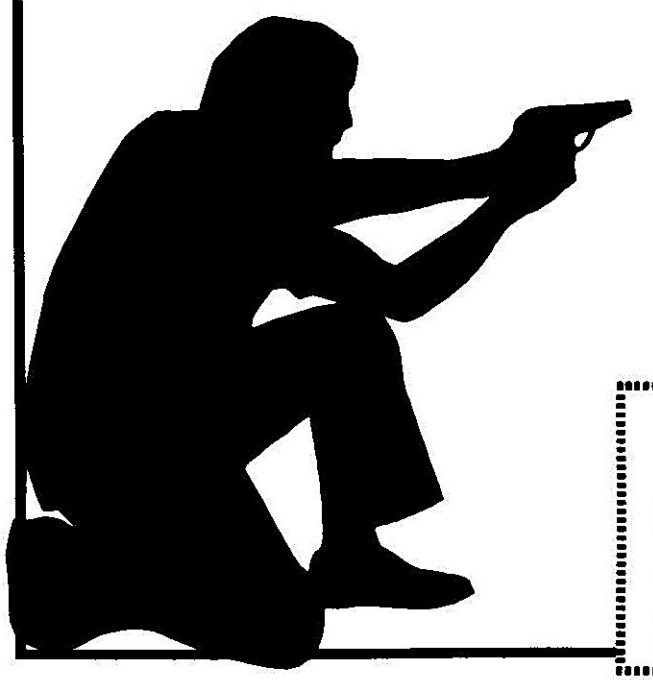

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emperor is dying; the players are the leaders of various powerful families, all vying through strength, diplomacy, influence, and skullduggery to become the next emperor! Play is a combination of ship movement and action cards; playing cards allow actions that range from stealing your enemy's plans and ambushing enemy squadrons to acquiring more ships from the Emperor. The last player with ships left in the game is the winner! All alliances must be broken before the game can be won; there's only *one* new emperor . . .

This game is a winner. Reminiscent of Grenadier's DwarfStar line, in scope and packaging, ***Struggle for the Throne*** features excellent counters, an easily-learned combat system, and a very well illustrated rulebook. The rules, once learned, do not stand in the way of quite a bit of freewheeling double-dealing; the game was made for alliances (and breaking them).

Unfortunately, the need for back-biting to make the game really interesting requires at least three players. And more examples of various game functions, particularly the influence gambit, would have been welcome.

Struggle for the Throne is a very good product for FASA; it also puts mini-games back on the market. If you have a lot of sneaky gaming friends, then ***Struggle for the Throne*** is worth the steep price.

—Craig Sheeley

THE LAST STARFIGHTER: TUNNEL CHASE (FASA); $6. Designed by Jordan Weisman. Seven-piece modular mapboard, 25 fighter counters, 64 starfighter record counter sheets, 24-page rulebook, 2 six-sided dice. For 2 to 25 players; playing time one to two hours. Published 1984.

Fighters pursue each other through the tunnels of an asteroid. Zipping around corners at high speed, the pilots seek to get on the enemy's tail and blast him down while avoiding collisions with the rocky walls. ***The Last Starfighter: Tunnel Chase*** puts the players in the cockpits of five different types of fighter craft to chase one another through the twisting raceways. Navigation through the turns and the dreaded Squeeze (a *narrow* tunnel) causes as much damage as your enemies do; the fighter's turn rate is matched with its speed and the turn difficulty of the curve, yielding a number to be beaten on 2d6. Then, *if* you survive the tunnels and can bring weapons to bear, you can try a shot at your opponent. Most of the game is spent whipping around at high speed, trying to stay in one piece and maybe get a snap-shot at the other fighters.

The Last Starfighter: Tunnel Chase is an excellent example of the minigame: easily learned, short playing time, variable mapboard, all components included, and a simple yet elegant combat system. Believe it or not, 25 players can actually play in the same game!

The counters and components are only adequate, and could have been better. FASA should have included a sheet of the turn charts to prevent the necessity of dog-earing the rulebook for constant chart consulting.

Hurrah for the newest entry into minigames, ***The Last Starfighter: Tunnel Chase***! Another triumph for FASA.

—Craig Sheeley

NECROMANCER (Steve Jackson Games); $4.95. Designed by Allen Varney. One plastic Pocket Box containing a 24-page rulebook, 11" x 17" map, 112 two-sided counters, and a ziplock bag. For two players; playing time 1-2 hours. Published 1983.

In ***Necromancer*** each player portrays a wizard who has the power to control the undead. Necromancer troops consist of zombies, skeletons, and wraiths. Both Necromancers strive to attain the mystical Jewels of Power while trying to eliminate their opponent. The Necromancers move about the game board, maneuvering on plateaus, slopes, and cliffs. Each Necromancer sends troops of undead into the Miasma, a magical mist, to search for the hidden Jewels; upon attaining one of several Jewels, the Necromancer activates it and finds out what its power is.

One of the unique features of the game is that each Necromancer can convert enemy units to his own side. This makes the game fast-paced and ever-changing. The more units a Necromancer controls, the weaker each individual unit is. And likewise, the fewer units one controls, the more powerful each individual unit is. The combat system is unique; attack strength and resistance vary with the number of units controlled. The rulebook contains a very useful pull-out section filled with charts and tables. Advanced scenarios introduce apprentices, mercenaries, dragons, and several magic items to be used by the Necromancers.

The only problem that stands out is that the Necromancer is the slowest moving unit in the game. To me it would seem that a living being would be able to move quicker than a shambling undead creature. This can be overcome in the game: With the aid of a Jewel of Power a Necromancer might be able to increase his movement ability.

Overall, ***Necromancer*** is action-packed, fast-moving, and ever-changing. It is a unique game which most gamers should find exciting to play.

—Kevin Frey

THE OMEGA WAR (with *Ares* magazine no. 14). Designed by David James Ritchie. 16-page rulebook, 200 counters, 22" x 34" mapsheet. For two players. Playing time 6-8 hours. Published 1983.

In the year 2121, a ten-day atomic war devastated the nations of the earth. In the following three centuries, a rebuilt North America has been loosely organized into a series of clanholds and population reserves governed from the domed settlements of the World Union. Unknown to the Union, a group of rebel natives have banded together to form the secret "Omega Organization" and are planning a revolt once they've managed to rally a sufficiently powerful force of "freemen" to take them on. Thus the stage is set for ***The Omega War***, an ambitious but disappointing two-player boardgame designed by David Ritchie.

The theme of an after-the-holocaust world is nearly as tired as that of a "freeman" rebellion, but ***The Omega War*** manages to combine the two into a fairly original setting. The action takes place on a colorful map of the (former) United States, now divided into nine clanholds and three reserves. A number of Union settlements are located within each area; among them are Metros (administration centers), Warrens (subterranean factory towns), and the Bubble (an undersea city). Nomad hordes and Mutants roam the outlands and may be convinced to join the rebel cause. The various factions are organized in a complex political and social system, making for some potentially promising situations.

But the game system fails to live up to the premise. Strip away the science-fiction packaging and you're left with little more than a run-of-the-mill wargame, complete with infantry and air units, supply sources, and zones of control. Once units are mobilized and assigned to areas, the game quickly becomes a series of isolated battles for the Union settlements scattered across the map. And this war is a long one; the campaign game takes 29 turns to complete, with each turn consisting of 35 (!) individual steps. Further, the design of the counters makes it next to impossible to keep track of which units belong to which side. The Nomad units are all about the same color, and you have to look close to distinguish the basic units of each force. A real mess.

Not only is ***The Omega War*** too long and too dull, the stiff turn sequence and confusing graphics make it a chore to play. Too bad, because there are certainly enough ideas here for a decent game. As presented, ***The Omega War*** suffers from too much ambition and too little development.

—Rick Swan

THE HIGH CRUSADE (TSR); $6 (with *Ares* magazine No. 16). Designed by David Cook. 16-page rulebook, 200 counters, one 22" x 33' mapsheet. For two players. Playing time 3-4 hours. Published 1983.

Quality science fiction boardgames are few and far between, so it's a pleasure to report that ***The High Crusade*** is a real gem, endlessly playable and a genuine challenge for both sides. Based on Poul Anderson's novel of the same name, ***The High Crusade*** recreates the struggle of the rebel Crusaders in their mission to overthrow the evil Wersgorix empire. Hopelessly outnumbered at the outset, the Crusader player attempts to rally Independent Races (including the mysterious Thralls) and maintain fortresses on key strategic planets while avoiding the onslaught of the powerful enemy conquerors.

Obviously, the Rebels-vs.-the-Empire premise (not to mention the game map) owes much to ***Freedom in the Galaxy***, and the planetary conversion concept is reminiscent of SPI's excellent ***Sword and the Stars***. Overall, however, ***The High Crusade*** is a much easier system to handle, in addition to boasting several unique features of its own. Crusader units, for instance, earn medieval titles of knight, baron, and bishop; cathedrals must be established on converted planets in order for an archbishop to become the New Pope (which in turn is needed for a Crusader to be crowned King, necessary to win the game). An IQ Track keeps track of the Wersgorix player's current level of intelligence concerning the Crusader player's activities, and an Equipment

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Track limits or increases the extent of Crusader operations. A unique combat table gives results in narrative paragraphs, and there are plenty of random events (including ionic storms, helpful ambassadors, and religious heresy) to keep things hopping.

Although the game is fairly straightforward, the layout of the rules makes for some tough going; "How To Win," for instance, is explained in Part 5, while the "Victory Conditions" are in Part 10. Be prepared for several read-throughs to get everything straight. The game board is also awkwardly designed, with silver numbers disappearing against green planets. The numbers of the point tracks are all but indistinguishable from one another. These, however, are nothing more than minor production problems and no reflection on the game design itself.

With the demise of *Ares*, it'd be a shame if a great game like ***The High Crusade*** got lost in the shuffle. There are apparently no plans to reissue *Ares* games in boxed versions, so you'll have to round up a copy of issue 16 to get the game. It's worth the effort. ***The High Crusade*** is an absolute treat.

—Rick Swan

STAR TREK: THE ROLE PLAYING GAME, SECOND EDITION (FASA); $12. Designed by Guy W. McLimore, Jr., Greg K. Poehlein, David F. Tepool, Wm. John Wheeler, Jordan K. Weisman, Michael P. Bledsoe, Forest Brown and L. Ross Babcock III. Two 40-page, one 48-page 8½" x 11" books, two 20-sided dice, boxed. For GM and several players. Published 1984.

Not content with an excellent roleplaying version of the most popular SF series of all time, FASA has released a second edition of ***Star Trek: The Role Playing Game*** — and has somehow managed to make the game even better than before. The new edition is priced more in reach of the average gamer than the original $25 version. It omits some of the frills of the first edition (available elsewhere for those who desire them), making it even more accessible to the beginning roleplayer, yet just as rich for the veteran. The game is divided into three separate books now — "Star Fleet Officer's Manual," with basic character generation and combat; "Cadet's Orientation Sourcebook," containing the background of the *ST:RPG* universe; and the "Game Operations Manual," for GM information — making it even easier to find needed sections quickly in play.

The new *ST:RPG* improves on the very playable systems of the old, expanding or streamlining them for added *ST* "realism" or greater playability. The sections on END losses, fatigue, healing, and medical aid have been revamped and are much clearer and easier to use than before. Additional information is provided on the Federation, Star Fleet and the various other races in the *ST* universe. Generation has also been expanded, so that the Academy is more a *learning* institute than before, with a greater variety of skills available — including many, such as ecology, bionics, and meteorology, not in the first edition at all.

Problems are few in this edition of *ST:RPG*. Some items from the original were regrettably dropped, possibly for space reasons: Descriptions of Star Fleet's minor divisions, sample *ST* creatures, and Kevin Riley's NPC stats are among the missing. And the console-based starship combat system has moved to the separate ***STII Starship Combat Simulator***. The biggest flub is that three of the Helmsman's skills are missing from the Branch School catalog in the main rules section (but appear on the Character Generation Short Form). Also, the service experience table is incorrect as set: *Constitution*-class starship service should be on the first line instead of Star Fleet Academy "Command," which reappears on the last line. And the table's use is better explained on the short form.

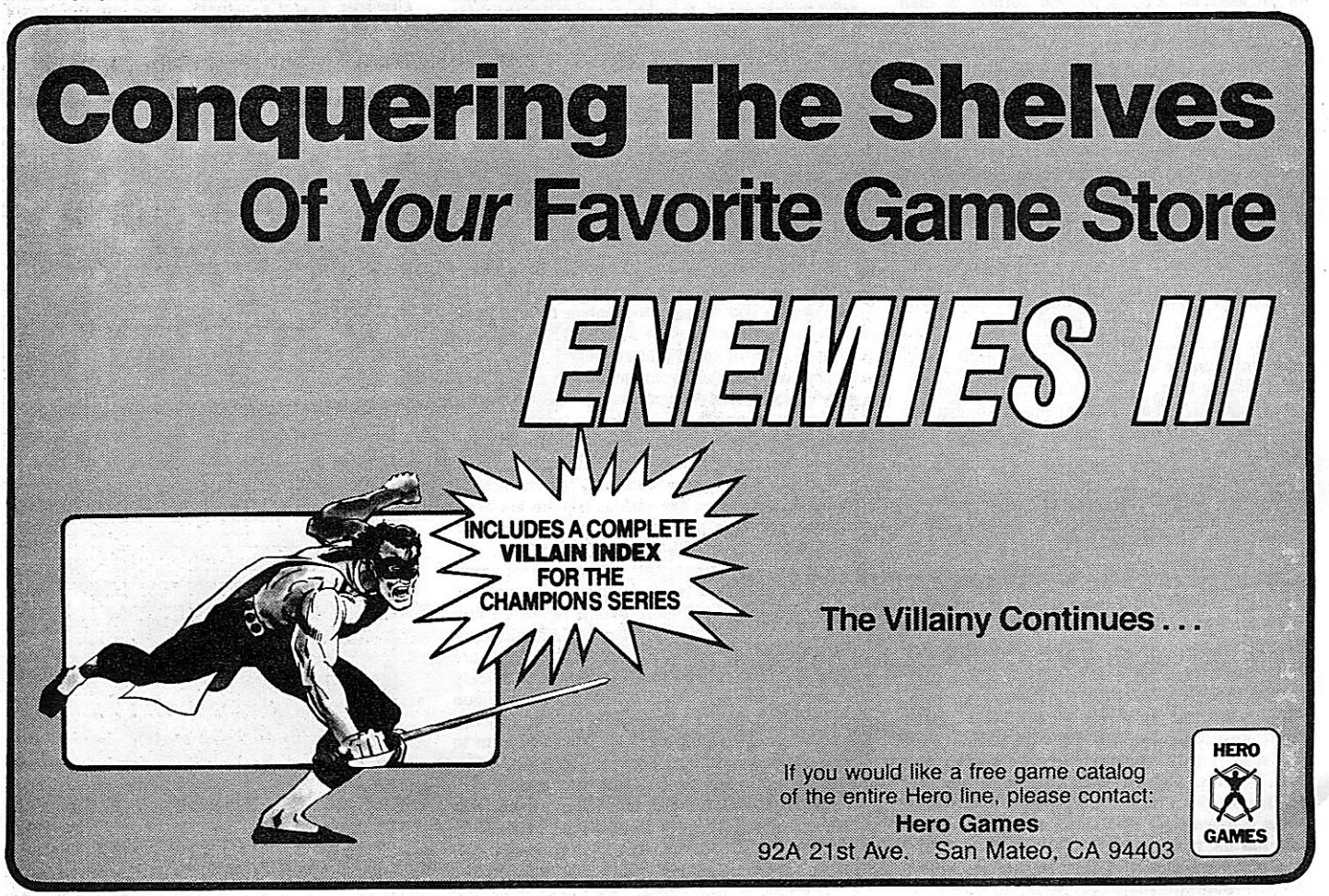
Overall, though, second edition ***Star Trek: The Role Playing Game*** is an even better avenue to gaming the final frontier than its predecessor. Those who own the original won't *need* this edition to continue to play, as both are compatible, but will certainly find enough new material that they won't be sorry for buying it. If you haven't yet tried *ST:RPG* — especially if you're new to SF roleplaying — I recommend this game over its competitors for ease of play, consistency, and sheer enjoyment.

—William A. Barton

HEART OF OAK: NAVAL MINIATURES FOR THE AGE OF FIGHTING SAIL (Fantasy Games Unlimited); $7 separately or as part of boxed ***Privateers & Gentlemen*** roleplaying set, $17. Designed by Jon Williams. 8½" x 11" 40-page book plus eight pages of pull-out charts and cut-out ship counters. For two or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1983.

Jon Williams, author of five novels in the *Privateers and Gentlemen* sea saga, has written a meticulously researched set of rules for naval wargaming in the age of sail, 1755-1815. The science of sailing naturally forms the core of these rules, which Williams explains in a manner that enables even confirmed landlubbers (like me) to understand and learn rapidly. He starts by discussing and explaining general terminology and goes on to explicate the rules behind simple maneuvers like tacking and wearing and taking on and off sail. His tournament rules, for experienced players or confirmed old salts, introduce complicated maneuvers like kedging, scudding, club-hauling, etc.

There is a nicely-realized compromise between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reality and playability in the rules. For example, the problems inherent in simultaneous ship movements are avoided by having players roll for initiative each turn and then move single ships, rather than their whole fleet or squadron, alternately. Combat is also simple, yet realistic in result. Crew casualties, for example, are taken as a function of hull damage. There is also an intricate critical hits table separated into various firing ranges that covers every conceivable damage possibility.

Heart of Oak is an extremely enjoyable wargame. What makes it even more enjoyable, however, is the fact that it can be conjoined with roleplaying rules (available in the boxed version of the game) so that a player can, if he's skillful and lucky, watch his very own Horatio Hornblower rise from ensign to admiral while either replaying actual historical conflicts or extended campaigns of the gamemaster's imagination.

Physically, ***Heart of Oak*** is nicely organized and very attractively laid out. The illustrations are a curious blend of modern drawings and reproductions of old engravings of sailing vessels. The latter are informative and interesting. The former are neither.

Heart of Oak can be recommended to those gamers who want to adventure in a universe that, although familiar from our history books, is also as exciting, heroic, and deadly as any fantasy universe ever imagined.

—John Miller

SPACE INFANTRY (D&R Game Design); $4.95. Designed by Daniel Douglas Hutto and Roger Allen Esnard. One 8½" x 5½" 68-page rulebook. For one gamemaster and an indefinite number of players; playing time open-ended. Published 1982.

In the milieu of ***Space Infantry***, the players take on the roles of space cadets in some sort of futuristic military force. Characters have "qualities," that is, strength, agility, etc. — nothing new here. This is followed by some confused rules on ranks and the introduction of a handful of possible skills. There are about a dozen pages of weapon and equipment lists. The combat rules, scattered around the booklet, seem to be concentrated around a number of charts; a surprising array of tables deal with the chances for success of quite a variety of maneuvers. The rulebook touches on some of the most important aspects of any starfaring type of RPG: starships, aliens, and planets, but handles all in the most sketchy manner.

According to the capsule review format, this is the paragraph in which I am supposed to talk about the good things about the game. Hmmm, let's see . . . The typesetting is very nice; were it not for the horrendously bad artwork, this rulebook would at least *look* professional. And the game certainly displays a high degree of sincerity and exuberance, and (despite a seemingly conscious effort to hide it) a certain amount of imagination. It strikes me as a sort of cottage-industry offering: Several gamers got together and said, "Hey, I bet *we* could design a game!" and plunged into it.

Describing what's wrong with the game is much easier. The rules are poorly written, inadequately explained, and haphazardly organized. It is difficult to conduct something as fundamental to the game as rolling up a character or determining a round of combat with the rules as they are written without filling in the weak spots. A number of the rules sections, especially those dealing with skills, computers, and space ships, are just ludicrous when they *are* understood. Any sort of background or setting is totally lacking — just who are these Space Infantry anyway? The page and a half devoted to describing how to create an alien race is woefully inadequate. As a final note, the artwork, apart from some decent drawings of vehicles and space craft, is abysmal. No artwork is better than bad artwork and certainly the book would have looked better had these pictures been left out.

I can't fault these designers for trying; despite everything about ***Space Infantry*** that I didn't like, there's a certain sincerity to the ideas presented here. The designers have a game, but there is definitely a problem in communicating it. I wonder how much better ***Space Infantry*** would have been had it had an outside and objective editor; then, it might have been usable. As it is, I imagine that ***Space Infantry*** could be made into a workable roleplaying system were the gamemaster willing to use it as a base and do most of the design work himself. But the questions is, why bother when one can start from scratch or pick up one of the infinitely superior systems already available? There's no question about one thing: ***Space Infantry*** is certainly one to pass up.

—Tony Watson

SHERLOCK HOLMES CONSULTING DETECTIVE GAME (Sleuth Publications, Ltd.); $22. Designed by Gary Grady. Three-ring vinyl binder containing an 8½" x 11" 32-page Newspaper Archive book, 6" x 9" 46-page Case Book, 6" x 9" 8-page rulebook, 6" x 9" 15-page London Directory, and 24" x 28" London street map. For one to several players; playing time variable. Published 1982, revised 1983.

For mystery lovers, those who enjoy a good puzzle, or gamers who like a game that is easy to play yet extremely challenging, I can think of none better than Sleuth Publications' excellent ***Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective Game***. Uniquely packaged in a handsome brown 3-ring binder graced with the silhouette and signature of the master sleuth of Baker Street himself, SHCD contains everything necessary to thrust you back to the fog-shrouded streets of Victorian London to match wits with Holmes on any of ten confounding mysteries — cases with titles such as "The Case of the Mystified Murderess," "The Case of the Cryptic Corpse," or the ominous "Thames Murders."

While the cases may be tough enough to stump all but the most astute armchair detectives, the game itself is quite simple to play. Gamers are members of Holmes' Baker Street Irregulars, and so are treated (in the first pages of the Clue Book) to a lecture by the great detective, instructing them on prime sources of information in researching a case. Upon choosing one from the Case Book, the information there is read, giving the player(s) suggestions on where to search for clues at various locations on the map. Each game turn, one such location may be visited by the player and any clue corresponding to the map number read from the Clue Book. The locations of individuals named in the Case Book may be found by consulting the London Directory, which is keyed to the map. Other clues may be obtained by scouring the "agony columns" or features of the London papers contained in the Newspaper Archive. Once a player feels he has enough information to solve the mystery, he may take the quiz for the case he's on, scoring it from the solution section of the Case Book and checking his time in solving the case against Holmes' to see if he's beat the master at his own game (highly unlikely). The game may be played solitaire, by two competing players, or by a group working together.

All of the components of ***SHCD*** are of top-notch quality and aid greatly in expressing the Victorian "feel" of the game. Especially nice is the London map, which notes the locations of such important spots as Victoria Station, the British Museum, Scotland Yard, the Tower of London, and, of course, 221B Baker Street, along with various police stations, parks, and railroad tracks

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through the city, in various hues of yellow, orange, green, and pink (on the second edition map). As noted, all the cases are quite challenging. Though I've been an aficionado of the Holmes stories for some time now, I've been hard pressed to solve several of the cases — and never have I beaten the master to the answer. Other nice touches to the game include the London newspapers, which include snatches of Victoriana (and not a few red herrings) along with the valid clues, and the presentations of several of the cases, one of which is simply a handwritten note from Holmes to "check today's *Times*."

In spite of its overall excellence, ***SHCD*** does exhibit a few minor flaws. Simple as the rules are, adventure gamers seem to want to read more into them than is there, which can cause problems. For example, though the map has a time scale, this is only to trace the travels of characters being questioned in the game — not of the players. It takes a player the same amount of time to reach a location across the street as across the map. This isn't stated clearly enough in the rules, which could lead some players to spend several game turns in transit while others are picking up nearby clues, if they're used to adventure games with a more "realistic" time sequencing. Also, because of the nature of the Clue Points at the various locations (which read like the event paragraphs in solo RPGs), you might find yourself getting an answer to a question you don't yet know enough to ask! This is unavoidable due to the format, yet sometimes exasperating. Another minor problem is that the Directory doesn't cross-reference from the map — you can find a location on the map from checking a name in the Directory, but you can't find out what is at a certain map number by consulting the Directory, unless you wish to go through all the listings until you happen to run across that number.

I've found the two-player format much less satisfying than the solo or group versions, too. In competition, it's possible one player can find a solution (correct or otherwise) much earlier than the other and end his part in the game, leaving the other player to go on alone, possibly for quite some time depending on his tenacity — or obtuseness. The scoring can be a problem here, too. In the first game I played, my opponent dropped out early in the case. His solution was totally wrong, while mine was two-thirds correct. Ye *he* won on scoring. Why? Because for every turn you take longer than Holmes to solve the case, you *lose* points. His score was 0, but mine was in the negatives because I hung in for so many extra turns. Such anomalies can be avoided by sticking to solo and group play, however.

It should also be noted that there are a few typos here and there. Most aren't serious, but Sleuth has noted in one of its irregular newsletters that in the Solution to Case Six, "Patrick O'Hara" should read "Nat Cook." Those having extra problems on Case Six, take note.

Yet in spite of these picky little problems, I still have to say that the ***Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective Game*** is the best mystery game I've ever had the privilege to be stumped by. After acing most games of ***Clue*** or ***221B Baker Street*** with no sweat, it's a refreshing feeling. The folks at Sleuth Publications are to be commended for the effort they put into this game (and of course, they already have been; although it is not a boardgame, ***SHCD*** won the Charles Roberts Award for Best Fantasy Boardgame of 1982 — and most deservedly). Those of you for whom ten cases aren't enough, however, be advised that one supplement, ***The Mansion Murders***, with five more cases, is already available *(see the review on page 53)* and a second is in the works (and may be out by the time you read this). As both a confirmed Sherlockian and a dedicated gamer, I can't recommend this game highly enough. Unless you simply *hate* mysteries — buy it! Definitely *not* elementary.

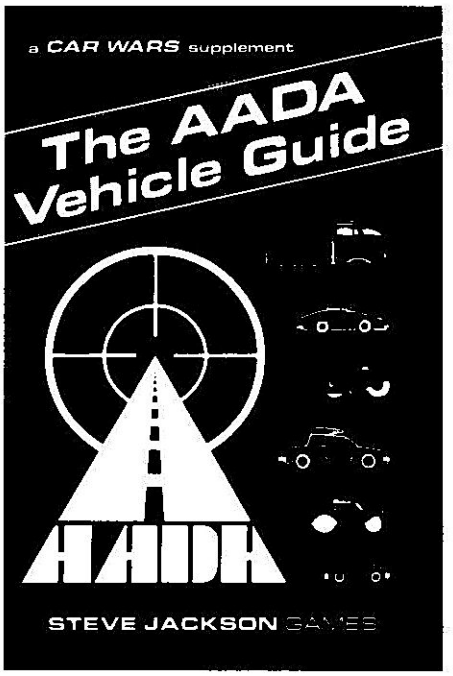
—William A. Barton

SUPPLEMENTS

THE AADA VEHICLE GUIDE (Steve Jackson Games); $4.95. Designed by Scott Haring and Jim Gould; illustrated by Kim Strombo, Jeff George, David Welling, and others. Supplement to ***Car Wars***. 64-page 5½" x 8½" book. Published 1984.

The AADA Vehicle Guide resembles, more than anything, a futuristic copy of *Jane's Armored Vehicles*. 129 different vehicles (with 133 variations) are presented. Each vehicle description includes a brief analysis of the vehicle, statistics, and then variants. All entries are pictured in side, top, front, and rear view. The vehicles listed range from motorcycles to heavy buses, tractor-trailers, and helicopters. Sections of rules detailing the hybrid "trike" vehicle (an excellent and *very* vicious compromise between a bike and a car) and off-road combat follow the vehicle listings. A complete listing of all equipment added to but not included in the game ***Car Wars*** completes the book (save for two "Late Arrivals"). The rules on trikes include their construction and operation; the rules on off-road combat illustrate the advantage of the aforementioned vehicles when the fight goes to the countryside! Off-road modifications, dangers, and hazards are detailed; for you *Dukes of Hazzard* fans, there's even a section on jumping off hills and ramps!

The ***Guide*** is a wonderful step in the ***Car Wars*** march. The listings are exhaustive; the amount of variety achieved with the limited number of body sizes is staggering. The format is unique, a first for



Car Wars (or any other game); the multi-view drawings are detailed and useful. No GM need scramble to create a road encounter ever again; just reach for the ***Guide***. The trikes have been needed for a long time, and the off-road rules add (literally) a new dimension to autoduelling.

I wish that all of the illustrations had been in the ***Car Wars*** scale of 1" = 15', instead of the weird scales of 1" = 11½' or 17½'. And the practice of reducing weapons and components to acronyms, while a useful practice considering the 11 basic weapons, has been taken a bit far, since an additional 19 weapons and components have been added to the list! As the stats include these acronyms, it gets a bit confusing if you don't have the list memorized.

The AADA Vehicle Guide is a prize. Grab it while it lasts; I predict that the shelves will empty of this very quickly.

—Craig Sheeley

THE DAWN OF DNA (Fantasy Games Unlimited); $5. Designed by Ken Campbell. Adventure for ***Villains & Vigilantes***. One 8½" x 11" 19-page book, 11" x 17" cardstock counter insert. For GM and several players; playing time indefinite. Published 1984.

The Dawn of DNA is an adventure scenario for FGU's ***Villains & Vigilantes*** superhero RPG. It pits superheroic player-characters against the insidious Doctor DNA (is the AMA aware of all these nasties in its ranks?) and his European supervillain flunkies, the Errants. Doc DNA, it seems, comes from another dimension with a goal to mutate mankind into superbeings — and is surprised to find that in some cases this has already happened. So instead, he decides to conquer the world with the aid of its existing super-minions — those who can be converted to the "master race" idea. All who resist will be turned into mindless zombies. The scenario describes Doc's plans and the bumbling attempts of the Errants to cover up what is happening — usually thwarted by their mad ally Shee-Ariel and her alien Shredders. The adventure features maps of important locations, including DNA's secret lab; stats for all the supervillains involved; and other information to help the GM run the adventure.

The most interesting features of the scenario are some of the super-villains in Doc's pay — not your average lot of world-conquerors. Most have interesting quirks — Adonis' narcissus complex, Shee-

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Ariel's psychotic temper, and the disgusting natures of the acidic Scuz and Cockroach and his six-legged buddies. The counter insert depicting heroes, villains, assorted NPCs (including cockroach hordes) and vehicles — even a light plane — is a useful aid to play that should be imitated by other companies.

The only real problem with this adventure is that it's somewhat skimpy as far as narrative goes — a lot of the space is taken up with maps, illustrations, and white space. The traditional comic page on the back is even repeated inside. Other *V&V* adventures in the line have been a bit more meaty.

Still, *The Dawn of DNA* is a solid, if not overly spectacular or innovative, adventure that could easily occupy an afternoon or evening of play for characters of any of the current superhero RPGs available.

—William A. Barton

CITIES OF HARN (Columbia Games); $12. By N. Robin Crossby. Supplement to ***Harn*** (which is, itself, a supplement usable with any FRP system). 64-page 8½" x 11" booklet. Playing time indefinite. Published 1983.

This is a guide to the seven cities of the island-continent of Harn, as originally described in Columbia's ***Harn***. It comprises 31 pages of descriptive text, 30 pages of maps (8 in color), and two pages of map keys. The entire supplement is designed to be taken apart, three-hole punched, and placed in a ring binder as part of the "Encyclopedia Harnica."

Half of the book consists of maps. Each city map is actually repeated three times: once in brown-tone as a part of the encyclopedia entry, once in full color to be admired and shown to players, and once in black-and-white to be photocopied. I'm not sure what to make of this. If there were only two versions — one color and one b&w — I would applaud. But the third repetition seems to use up eight pages while adding no information. The non-city maps show buildings of special interest, including a coliseum devoted to Roman-type spectacles. The written descriptions, as you might expect in a book that covers seven cities in 31 pages, are interesting but sketchy. Inexperienced gamemasters may find they have little to work with here. However, seasoned GMs will be able to fill these descriptions out to their own satisfaction.

Physical quality of the maps is excellent. The text, unfortunately, is hard to read. Please, Columbia, get a typesetter!

All in all, this supplement will be of great interest to those who liked ***Harn***, and is worth a look by any referee in need of city-building ideas. The only real problem, as with other Columbia products, is the price. Many will feel $12 is too much to pay for a single 64-page book. If that does not deter you, by all means look at ***Cities of Harn***.

—Steve Jackson

THE MANSION MURDERS (Sleuth Publications); $12. No designer listed. Supplement to ***Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective***. One 5½" x 8¼" 28-page Case Book, one 8½" x 11" 12-page Newspaper Archive, one 8½" x 11" 80-page Clue Book, two 16" x 23" Mansion maps, folder. Published 1983.

For mystery buffs whose only complaint about Sleuth Publications' award-winning ***Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective*** game was that it didn't contain enough cases, Sleuth has responded with Vol. II of ***SHCD — The Mansion Murders***, five more mysteries worthy of the Master Sleuth of Baker Street (and those who follow in his footsteps). This time, Holmes' modern-day Baker Street Irregulars are taken to the fashionable West End to puzzle over cases with titles as exotic as "The Case of the Defenestrated Debutante," "The Case of the Toxic Trinity," and "The Termination of a Teetotaler" (Dr. Watson would be proud). The style of Vol. II follows that of the original game: The Case Book presents the known facts of each case in an entertaining narrative fashion and provides solutions at the end, as presented by Holmes at the conclusion of his own investigation. Clues are to be found for each case in the Clue Book, keyed to the London map in the original game or to the mansion plans in this volume, and the Newspaper Archives offer articles from five 1888-9 editions of *The Times* in which players may find additional clues.

The mysteries of ***The Mansion Murders*** are most intriguing and should keep aficionados of the game as much afoot as the original did in their attempts to solve the crimes. The mansion plans for four of the five cases are nice bonuses, too — role-players of games such as ***Mercenaries, Spies & Private Eyes*** should have no trouble adapting them for use in their own scenarios. The Case Book also explains the correct use of the Game Scale of the London map, something that was unclear in the original rules; also, the scale is extended to include travel by hansom.

What few problems appear in this supplement are mainly those inherent in the system itself — the possibility of getting answers to questions you don't yet know enough to ask, etc. Unavoidable and not a major hindrance to play, but a bit annoying at times ("What lady are you referring to?" — I didn't ask that!). Those with the first edition of ***SHCD*** will need to secure a copy of the second-edition map and London Guide, however, or some clue locations will be unavailable to them for the cases in Vol. II.

The Mansion Murders upholds ***SHCD***'s reputation as the best of the Sherlockian/mystery games currently on the market. After these cases, I can hardly wait for the next set.

—William A. Barton

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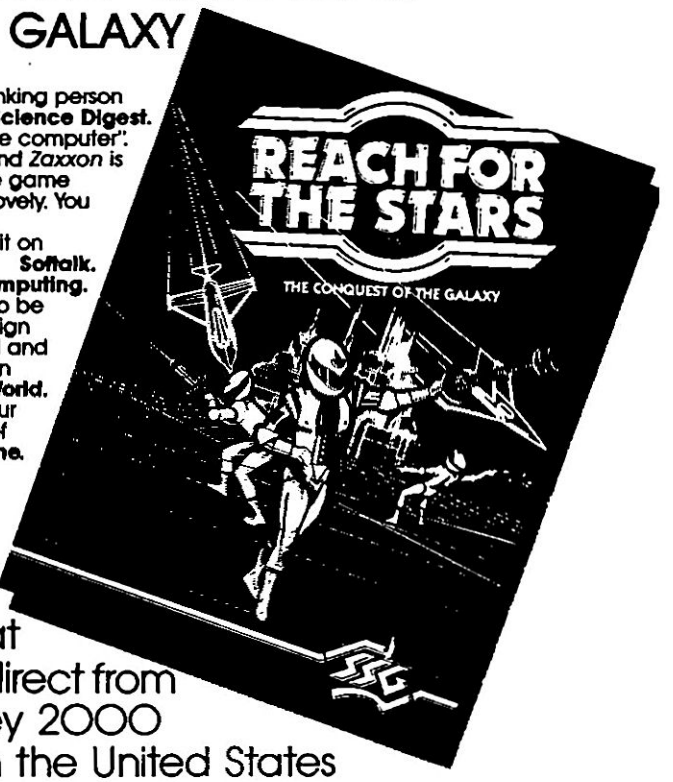

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OCTOPUSSY (Victory Games, Inc.); $7.95. Written by Neil Randall. Module for ***James Bond 007***. One 44-page booklet, full wraparound folder/gamemaster screen and a Briefing Dossier with 8 Mission Information Sheets. For one to four players; playing time indefinite. Published 1983.

Octopussy is one of Victory Games' first two adventures for its ***James Bond 007*** RPG. It details the search for the murderer of a "00" agent and the victim's possible connection to a Faberge Egg, as per the movie — but with a twist or two. Characters from the movie are given in game statistics and with detailed backgrounds. The scenario itself generally follows the course of the movie.

Octopussy provides an excellent example for aspiring gamemasters, as well as an interesting adventure in its own rights. Anyone with a knowledge of the movie expecting to "breeze through" will probably be in for quite a shock. As with the original rules, the production quality is high. James Talbot's artwork (previously decried by Aaron Allston in *Space Gamer* 67's ***James Bond 007*** review) is more than adequate; the cover drawing, adapted from the original movie poster artwork, is excellent.

There are no real problems with this module. The box it comes in is open-fronted and not very sturdy (this has been corrected in later releases) and the gamemaster may find himself "fudging" dice rolls and leading his players onto particular paths to recreate certain scenes from the movie, such as the jungle hunt or the climactic "planehanger" sequence.

Overall, ***Octopussy*** is an excellent buy, a must for any ***James Bond 007*** gamemaster. It could easily be converted to another gaming system, so it is worth purchasing by anyone interesting in secret-agent RPGs.

—Steve Crow

TROUBLE FOR HAVOC (Chaosium, Inc.); $10. By Yurek Chodak, Donald Harrington, Charles Huber, and Steve Perrin. "Anthology scenario pack" for ***Superworld***, ***Champions***, and ***Villains and Vigilantes***. 80-page book. For referee and three to six beginning or moderately-experienced players; playing time indefinite. Published September 1984.

The common element in the three superhero adventures in ***Trouble for Havoc*** is supposed to be a loosely-organized villain group named — can you guess? — Havoc. In fact the organization is *so* loose that it has no apparent effect whatever on the course of these scenarios; but it provides a good excuse to introduce a *bunch* of new super-characters. The first batch shows up in the introductory scenario, "Crisis at Caliente," yet another tired attempt to heist a nuclear reactor. Then, in "Return of the Elokians," the players investigate an earthquake caused by yet more evil-types — and find a subterranean humanoid race of remarkable origin. "Fourth for Bridge?" pits more Havoc villains against American and Soviet superheroes as all investigate an alien spacecraft downed in Antarctica. A five-page prefatory section gives new powers and rules clarifications for ***Superworld***.

Three-three-three fights in one! Journey to an underground city. Visit the scenic Antarctic and dig into a glacier. Save a dying alien race — no, *two* dying alien races! Best of all, confront nearly two dozen sharp and/or highly bizarre super types, including Deathgrip, a martial artist whose acidic flesh perpetually shifts and writhes; Sneak Thief, possessed by a darkness demon and given invisibility and desolidification powers to compensate for his blindness; a thawed-out Neanderthal with ice powers, and a Red Army general with *different* ice powers; Sonora, whose Snare/Entangle power works by creating little animals that swarm over an opponent; and one of the first transsexual supervillains I've ever encountered.

The problem is, this remarkable crew is shackled to some fairly ordinary scenarios. "Return of the Elokians" is large, pretty complete, and pretty novel; but "Fourth for Bridge?" gives most of its 30 pages over to villain descriptions, skimping badly on actual events (and I don't get the joke in the title — if any). The introductory adventure is thoroughly routine, if not outright dull. All three pieces present information in confusing order, telling (for instance) how to dispose of a particular villain long before you ever learn who he is or what he's doing. Likewise, all three interrupt their storylines with intrusive character stats, instead of extracting and appendicizing (?) them. And typographical errors abound.

If you want a lot of genuinely interesting superheroes and villains for your campaign, ***Trouble for Havoc*** is certainly worth examining. If you hunger for subterranean action, you could do worse than the second scenario here. But mostly the adventures are file-and-forget.

—Allen Varney

GOLDFINGER (Victory Games, Inc.); $7.95. Written by Robert Kern. Module for ***James Bond 007***. One 48-page booklet, full wraparound folder/gamemaster screen and Briefing Dossier with 8 Mission Information Sheets. For one to four players; playing time indefinite. Published 1983.

Goldfinger, from Victory Games, is based on the extremely popular movie of the same name and uses many of the characters from the film. The players are assigned to investigate one Auric Goldfinger and his gold-smuggling operation.

Anyone familiar with the movie can pretty well follow the plot, although some changes have been made. Part of the scenario, for instance, takes place

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in Johannesburg at one of Goldfinger's mines, and the climactic scene has been altered as well. A travel timetable between relevant locations is provided, and the characters' backgrounds are lovingly detailed.

One of the module's flaws is a carryover from the movie: There is very little in the way of "action." A small mistake makes Goldfinger's Johannesburg mining installation impossible to enter (the main gate has been eradicated on both the GM's and the players' map).

Overall, though, ***Goldfinger*** is a good buy for any ***James Bond 007*** GM, and of interest to any secret-agent roleplaying aficionado.

—Steve Crow

DR. NO (Victory Games, Inc.); $7.95. Written by Neil Randall. Module for ***James Bond 007***. One 48-page booklet, gamemaster screen, and Briefing Dossier with 8 Mission Information sheets. For one to four players; playing time indefinite. Published 1984.

Another in Victory Games' series of movie adaptations for its ***James Bond 007*** RPG, ***Dr. No*** follows the plot of the original movie as the players travel to Jamaica in search of a missing agent and find themselves involved in the nefarious schemes of the sinister Dr. No. Characters from the movie (and a few more as well) are listed with game statistics and detailed backgrounds. Maps are provided of Dr. No's island complex and several other points of interest.

As good as its predecessors, ***Dr. No*** follows the course of the movie faithfully, with only a few minor changes to throw off avid James Bond moviegoers. Neil Randall takes the characters of the movie and makes them three-dimensional, something which adds to *any* gaming module. Information that particular characters know is given under each character listing. A chart is also given for changing the difficulty of the module based on the number and rank of agents present. And as for artwork, James Talbot has my nomination for artist best qualified to draw Ursula Andress/Honeychile Rider.

Flaws are so few as to be almost nonexistent. The maps not printed on the gamemaster screen are in the center of the booklet and are not placed for removal. Also, the replacement of the "dragon" with a "spider god" seems to be change more for the sake of change than to add a "twist" to the module.

These are minor complaints, however, and they shouldn't deter ***James Bond 007*** gamemasters from going out and buying ***Dr. No*** immediately. Be assured that you are getting your money's worth.

—Steve Crow

STAR FLEET BATTLES SUPPLEMENT #1 (Task Force Games); $6.95. Designed by Stephen V. Cole and C. Michael Thompson. Supplement to ***Star Fleet Battles***. 20-page booklet, 12 pages of Ship System Displays, 2 counter sheets of 108 counters apiece. For two to six players; playing time one to five hours. Published 1983.

Supplement #1 could accurately be called the fighter supplement to ***Star Fleet Battles***, providing rules for the various fighter craft and carriers of the myriad races of the game. Along with the necessary tables for the use of the new fighters and carriers, the supplement introduces two major sets of rules to be added to the ***Star Fleet Battles*** system, concerning direct-fire resolution of seeking weapons and the use of fighters in dogfights (where they act more like aircraft than spaceships). The supplement is rounded out by five new scenarios using the new units and rules.

The counters are a welcome addition; no matter how many counters ***SFB*** players have, they can always use more. The Romulans and Hydrans finally get fighter counters of their own, and the Klingons get enough to make up a fighter group. The Ship System Displays are, of course, the best part of the supplement — and some strange ones appear, like the experimental Gorn and Lyran carriers (a pity both are unique; both are highly effective fighting ships as well as carriers).

Task Force would have done better to forego the direct-fire seeking weapon rules and put in some "history"; said rules are presented in such a confusing fashion that I couldn't understand them. And the idea of giving every race fighters is rather ridiculous. In the end, Task Force comes off looking like it's trying to turn the "official" ***SFB*** timeline and the General War into a starship representation of the naval battles of WWII.

If you want to collect every part of the ***Star Fleet Battles*** rules, or just want new counters and SSDs, then ***SFB Supplement #1*** might be a good buy. Otherwise, just skip the idea of carriers altogether and go with pseudo-fighters.

—Craig Sheeley

THE GEM AND THE STAFF (TSR); $6. Designed by John and Laurie Van De Graff. Adventure module (O1) for ***Dungeons & Dragons***. 11" x 17" mapsheet, 8½" x 11" cut-out character sheet, 16-page mapbook, 16-page rulebook. For two players; playing time one hour. Published 1983.

For those who find it impractical to assemble a group of players to tackle a roleplaying module or who simply wish to have a brief diversion from a larger campaign, TSR has introduced a line of "One on One" modules for ***Dungeons & Dragons***. Requiring only one player and one DM, ***The Gem and the Staff*** is an extremely playable example of the "One on One" system featuring two related adventures for a pre-rolled 8th-level thief. The goal of the player is the theft of (appropriately enough) an amber gem and a magical staff from the clutches of some nasty wizards, and there are enough obstacles and encounters along the way to make it a real challenge.

There are several special features that make ***The Gem and the Staff*** a pleasure to play. Unlike most roleplaying modules which may take hours or days to complete, a strict time limit is imposed for each of the two adventures. The time limit adds an interesting dimension to play; not only must the player accomplish his mission to win, he must do it quickly. Additionally, the player is encouraged to avoid time-consuming combat in order to spend more time wrestling with the various puzzles (and there are some formidable ones). Play is facilitated by the inclusion of a ready-to-use character sheet, a set of cut-out character figures, and (best of all) a 16-page mapbook. The mapbook is terrific; nearly every room mentioned in the module gets a full-page illustration, complete with furnishings, and a square grid so that the maps can be used for actual play. Using the mapbook, time usually spent by the DM in sketching out or explaining an encounter area can be used to run the adventure. Fact is, the mapbook is so useful and effective it'd be nice to see them included in future modules of all kinds.

In all fairness, it should be pointed out that ***The Gem and the Staff*** doesn't provide a lot of play value for the money. The two adventures combined are barely 16 pages long. Each one is timed at 30 minutes, meaning that the entirety of ***The Gem and the Staff*** is good for only an hour of play. Since the adventures largely depend on solving puzzles, replay value is virtually nil.

The Gem and the Staff does an excellent job of filling a roleplaying niche by providing quality material for just two players. Let's hope all future entries in TSR's "One on One" series are as good as this, but let's also hope that next time out we get a little more for our money.

—Rick Swan

THE ASSASSIN'S KNOT (TSR); $6. Designed by Len Lakofka. Adventure module (L2) for ***Dungeons & Dragons***. One double-sided 11" x 17" mapsheet, one single-sided 11" x 17" mapsheet/town table, 32-page rulebook. For an indefinite number of players; playing time indefinite. Published 1983.

Ever notice how hard the cover artists of adventure modules try to entice you into a purchase with dazzling scenes of battling warriors and unearthly creatures of every size and description? With that in mind, take a look at the cover of ***The Assassin's Knot***. Nothing so spectacular here, just a rather mundane scene of several assorted characters hanging around an inn waiting for something to happen. Apparently, the artist intended for them to look mysterious and threatening, but they don't. They just look bored. If you're thinking about undertaking this adventure, then you'd better be ready to join them!

The Assassin's Knot offers a murder mystery of sorts. Someone has killed the Baron of Restenford and all indications are that the solution to the murder lies somewhere in the tiny village of Garrotten. The players investigate the murder by interviewing the residents of Garrotten, gradually unravelling the secrets of the "Assassin's Guild" and the mysterious forces behind it. The bulk of the adventure takes place in the town, and there's no shortage of detail in its design. There are dozens of buildings, businesses, and homes, each with their own occupants with specific personalities and possessions. Some buildings, such as the Inn and the Church of Ospa, have elaborate histories and backgrounds that clearly represent some effort on the part of the designer.

If only the same effort had gone into making the game itself more interesting! There isn't much for the players to do besides dutifully drag from building

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to building in search of information. Not surprisingly, some of the characters can help, some can't; some are friendly, some are dangerous; some are magic users, some aren't . . . and on and on and on. This wouldn't be so bad if the NPCs were more interesting, but they aren't. Any experienced DM could populate towns as effectively by assembling a few tables of attributes and possessions and randomly rolling dice. What's more, the "mystery" is a very pedestrian affair. Without giving anything away, let's just say it won't keep Agatha Christie fans awake at night.

Although literately written, ***The Assassin's Knot*** commits the cardinal sin of gaming — it's just plain dull. Let me put it another way: I have an avid group of roleplayers who devour adventure modules like popcorn and out of the dozens we've played this year, ***The Assassin's Knot*** is the only one they've flatly refused to finish. Pass it by.

—Rick Swan

VILLAGE OF TWILIGHT (Pacesetter, Ltd.); $6. Designed by Gali Sanchez and Carl Smith. Adventure for ***Chill***. 28-page adventure booklet. For an indefinite number of players; playing time indefinite. Published 1984.

Village of Twilight is a complete and ready-to-play module for use with the ***Chill*** game. It has members of S.A.V.E. (the player characters) heading an expedition into the jungles of southern Mexico on the trail of yet another beast from the Unknown. It provides all the instructions a Chillmaster needs to run the adventure and leaves very few things to conjecture.

Village of Twilight provides a unique adventure setting and some unusual encounters. This module only hints at the true horror that awaits the characters; rather than follow obvious clues, the players are forced to experiment. Players familiar with ***Chill*** will have no advantage over novices when trying to solve the mysteries of ***Village of Twilight*** — all of the creatures and situations are new.

If ***Village of Twilight*** has a flaw, it is that beginning characters will find it extremely difficult to survive. There is no indication, in the text or the pre-generated characters provided, what "level" the characters should be. Also, while not entirely necessary, a few more maps could have been included to aid the Chillmaster in setting up the numerous encounters.

If ***Village of Twilight*** is a model of what we can expect from Pacesetter in the future, then they will have no problem obtaining a reserved spot on every gamer's shelf. I definitely recommend it to those who purchased the original ***Chill*** game and thought the introductory adventure included with the game, "Terror in Warwick House," was terrible. ***Village of Twilight*** more than makes amends.

—Jerry Epperson

THINGS (Pacesetter Ltd.); $8. Designed by Carl Smith, Mark Acres, Troy Denning, Gali Sanchez, Garry Spiegle, Stephen D. Sullivan, and Michael Williams. Supplement to ***Chill***. One 8½" x 11" 64-page book. Published 1984.

Those who found Pacesetter's supernatural RPG ***Chill*** lacking in only one thing — a greater variety of creatures than appeared in the game itself — should opt for a close encounter with ***Things***, a veritable coffin full of, well, *things* for intrepid ***Chill*** adventurers to combat. The book contains descriptions and game statistics for more than 50 new creatures from "the Unknown," along with stats for 17 more animals that occult investigators might encounter. In addition, 14 new Evil Way disciplines are outlined for use by these denizens of the dark. Creatures are listed alphabetically, from Alpine Vampires to Zombie Masters, and range from simple — but potentially deadly — entities like the Poltergeist to *really* nasty antagonists such as the formidable Oriental Vampire (second only to Dracula himself in power). Creatures are defined just as in the ***Chill*** "Horrors from the Unknown" book, but a new classification has been added to designate creatures as Masters, Servitors, or Independents. Additionally, a four-page pull-out in the center includes creature "character" sheets, a listing of all the Evil Way disciplines, including the new ones in this book, and an Animal Table with stats for all the game's animals.

Things should be a tremendous aid for the ***Chill*** GM who wishes to pit player-characters against something other than the old standby vampires, werewolves, and mummies. While some relatively familiar creatures, such as Manitous, Rakshasas, and Lorelei, are included, many lesser-known and exotic beasties — Ccoas, Chullpas, Hook Thaggis, and Tupilaqs — haunt these pages as well. Even the Flying Dutchman is listed as a possible spooky encounter. And the Animal Table gives stats for specific animals such as tigers, lions, and leopards that are simply lumped together as "Big Cats" in the main entry.

Problems are few in ***Things***. I found a couple of the creatures a bit too off-the-wall for my taste — the Mean Old Neighbor Lady and Gamins in particular. And I see no reason why stats weren't provided for various forms of Golems rather than merely listing them as "variable" when several types of Remnants are differentiated — especially since Frankenstein's monster is noted as being a variety of Golem.

Overall, though, ***Things*** is a book no Chillmaster should be without (likewise any ***Chill*** player who wishes a long life for his or her character). GMs of other supernatural RPGs such as ***Stalking the Night Fantastic*** could probably make good use of at least some of the information in ***Things***, too.

—William A. Barton

MASTER OF THE DESERT NOMADS (TSR); $5.50. Designed by David Cook. Adventure module (X4) for ***Dungeons & Dragons***. One 32-page book, 16" x 11" foldout map. For several players; playing time indefinite. Published 1983.

This is a good one. To the west of the peaceful Republic lies the Great Waste; aptly named, as it consists of the expansive Sind Desert bordered by the treacherous Salt Swamp. Peace has been maintained for years, but now there are reports that massive armies are gathering in the Great Waste for a major assault on the Republic. Behind it all is a mysterious entity known only as the Master. If the adventurers can locate and defeat the Master, there's a good chance that peace can be restored.

Not only does ***Master of the Desert Nomads*** provide welcome relief from the tedious dungeon exploration all too common in TSR *D&D* modules, it's a genuine epic in every sense of the word. The adventure spans hundreds of miles of desert, swampland, and mountain terrain, with plenty of fascinating sidetrips along the way. Players may encounter a desert battle involving hundreds of soldiers, a cursed river that attacks by dreams, or a buried temple inhabited by intelligent vultures! The encounters are not only exciting in themselves, they also provide alert players clues and insights about the Master and his evil secrets. In spite of the scope of the adventure, the presentation is clear and logical; the DM will have no problem keeping track of the action.

The module ends with the players searching for the Great Pass, beyond which lies the temple of the Master. As such, it's somewhat of a cheat. The characters don't come close to the Master, and the point at which the module ends seems fairly arbitrary. Since there is plenty of opportunity for trouble, the DM might want to be a little more benevolent than usual to insure that the players are still alive and kicking for Part II. Truth be told, the entire module is really just a prologue to Part II of the ***Desert Nomad*** series (***Temple of Death***) and in spite of what it says on the cover, it isn't very satisfying just played by itself.

Make sure you have access to ***Temple of Death*** before you start this one. Taken together, the ***Desert Nomad*** series is one of the most imaginative and exciting adventures produced by TSR in quite a while.

—Rick Swan

TEMPLE OF DEATH (TSR); $5.50. Designed by David Cook. Adventure module (X5) for ***Dungeons & Dragons***. One 32-page book, 16" x 11" foldout map. For several players; playing time indefinite. Published 1983.

When we last left our adventurers at the end of ***Master of the Desert Nomads*** (Part I of the two-part ***Desert Nomad*** series), they were poised at the foot of the Black Mountains, searching for the hidden Great Pass. Beyond it lies the Temple of Death (no connection with Indiana Jones), the secret lair of the Master who's been mobilizing the armies of the Sind Desert for an assault on the Republic. The adventurers must now make their way through the Great Pass, locate the Temple, and put an end to the Master's plans.

Roleplaying modules flop or fly on the strength of their designers' imagination and, like its predecessor, ***Temple of Death*** soars with surprises at every turn. Players will confront a zombie palace made entirely of fungus, a flying ship manned by skeletons, and a ladder of light that extends to the moon. There are several unique new monsters, including one that resembles a boulder with legs and another disturbingly called a "rot fiend." Maps and illustrations are attractive and functional; side and top views of the Temple are especially helpful in aiding players to visualize an unusual structure.

Since the adventure is largely set in the wilderness, the DM may have his hands full keeping the players heading in the right direction, especially if they weren't lucky enough to find a map in Part I. Some of the situations are a little sketchy. (What, for example, is supposed to be happening in the game while the players spend two entire days scaling the side of a 2400-foot cliff?) And finally, after two long modules of buildup, the final encounter with the Master is somewhat of a letdown. He's a pretty dull guy in light of what's come before; any experienced DM should be able to come up with something a lot more satisfying to wrap things up.

Unlike most other TSR multi-part modules, the two ***Desert Nomads*** adventures can't enjoyably be played on their own. Which brings up another beef: Are TSR's formats so rigid that they couldn't see their way clear to release this as a single 64-page module (and possibly save the buyer a couple of bucks in the process)? Taken with ***Masters of the Desert Nomads***, ***Temple of Death*** is great fun, but be forewarned — you're going to need both parts to do it right.

—Rick Swan

K'KREE (Game Designers' Workshop); $6. Designed by J. Andrew Keith and Loren K. Wiseman. Module for ***Traveller***. 40-page 8" x 11½" book in a folder. For two to ten players; playing time indefinite. Published 1984.

K'Kree, Traveller Alien Module 2, details the race known to humanity as the Centaurs. In the same format as the ***Aslan*** module, the book covers K'kree history and society first, followed by character generation systems, charts for rules changes, and an adventures section. The blatantly non-human K'kree require careful study by the gamemaster; they are totally unlike humans. Large, six-limbed, incurably claustrophobic, and very gregarious, the K'kree present a challenge to players and GMs

The year is 2615. Interstellar space travel has been commonplace for centuries. But the human expansion of the galaxy has been confined by four barrier zones of alien design. A recent invention has made it possible to pass through the fourth barrier zone, known as the Quadra Zone. Come explore the unknown regions of space that lie "BEYOND THE QUADRA ZONE."

BEYOND THE QUADRA ZONE is a new play by mail game. Turns are run once a week and include your colony's growth and development (population growth, training options, manufacturing options, buying & selling lists, mining, inventions, revenue, etc . . .). It also includes your fleet's movement, combat, a list of your specialized crewmen and their personal proficiency factors, object testing options, planet options, landing parties discovering: lost civilizations, dangerous aliens, lost alien devices, and others. You will also encounter new star systems, unknown objects floating in space, advanced civilizations that may aid or attack your fleet, and much more. We do not tack on any hidden costs for combat or alliances. The printout is in an easlly understood, narrative style.

For $2.00 we will send you a game set-up which includes the instruction booklet, equipment catalog, star map of the human inhabited star systems and a four-page 0-turn printout (includes movement, scanning and mining test phases; planet communication, selling and buying lists, and ship's equipment list and statistics. When sending for game material, mention this ad from **Space Gamer** and you will also receive **one free turn.** Each additional turn thereafter is $4.00 and includes all your ship and colony options. To receive your game material or for more information, call **(201) 337-3437** (Mon. - Sat.) or send your name, address and $2.00 to Quest Games, Inc., P.O. Box 210, Oakland, NJ 07436.

alike, with their need for racial companionship, wide open spaces, and their paranoia about meat-eaters. Complete rules on starship and weapons technology are included. The three adventures at the end of the book allow players to meet the K'kree from the standpoints of patron or antagonist, or actually play the K'kree themselves. The folder features comparative and skeletal drawings of the K'kree and a sector-arranged map of the K'kree area of domination.

The rules are quite complete, and detail the problems of playing the K'kree in easily understandable fashion. Particularly noteworthy are the adventures: They are excellent and quite playable. One even ties in with ***The Traveller Adventure***; I wish I had had this when I used that book.

Once again GDW receives a bad grade for its illustration policy. The *only* illustrations are on the cover. Players and GMs are left with only a pair of cover illustrations to base their visual models of the K'kree on.

The K'kree are a difficult race to game, but their difference should help to enliven any ***Traveller*** campaign. At $6, ***K'kree*** is a good buy for the amount of material included.

—Craig Sheeley

THE WINE OF THE MOON (Ragnarok Enterprises, 1402 21st Street NW, Washington, DC 20036); $2.50 (plus 50¢ postage and handling on mail orders). Designed by David F. Nalle. Supplement to ***Ysgarth Rule System***. One 5½" x 8½" 24-page rulebook (including 8-page pull-out adventure, ***Ironfield***). For an indefinite number of players; playing time indefinite. Published 1983.

This is the first of three supplements planned by Ragnarok Enterprises in support of its fantasy roleplaying game, ***Ysgarth Rule System*** (***YRS***). In it are explanations, expansions, and corrections of the first edition of ***YRS***, plus four new magic classes (Darkmage, Lightmage, Runist, and Village Mage), five priestly orders, and 32 new skills. The scenario, ***Ironfield***, adds a few new magical items and creatures to the game.

For all those players who purchased the first edition of ***YRS***, ***The Wine of the Moon*** will hold a special interest. Those who managed to hold on to their money long enough to get the second edition of the rules will also find it worth owning, as there is a lot of good material here. Especially nice are the magic classes and deity elaborations. Both sections will aid the gamemaster in setting up religious factions and high-powered mage NPCs. ***Ironfield*** is an excellent scenario, a departure from the standard "run-in-hack-the-monsters-and-leave" adventures which plague the marketplace today. The experience system given in the supplement was sorely needed in the original rules, so prospective buyers should pick it up for this if nothing else.

If there are any major flaws in ***The Wine of the Moon***, I have yet to find them, though I have a few quibbles with some of the material. First is the tiny print, which is hard on the eyes after an hour or so of reading. There also seems to be an attitude problem, which surfaces in the responses to some of the questions. Sincere inquiries on, for instance, whether tribes have assigned alignments (not too strange if you've looked through the ***AD&D Monster Manual*** lately) get answered with a statement like: "What a silly concept." I doubt that the questioner will ever ask anything about ***YRS*** in the future — "that'll take care of him!" Also, some of the skills seem trivial. I'm sure that somewhere, someone is going to love being able to practice "mendicancy" (why not call it begging?), "sexual technique" (I'll bet there's a story behind this one), or "valet" (which might derive from the "etiquette" skill), but not in my campaign. That's just a waste of skill points.

Overall, ***The Wine of the Moon*** has a few faults, but its merits far outweigh its liabilities. For owners of the ***YRS***, this is a "must buy": for those who don't own ***YRS***, though, there probably isn't that much generic material to cull from it to offset the asking price. However, if any of the supplement's material sounds interesting, you could do far worse than owning it and ***YRS*** both.

—Jerry Epperson

PLAY AIDS

CHILL MASTER'S SCREEN, featuring *CASTLE DRACULA* (Pacesetter, Ltd.); $6. Designed by Gali Sanchez. Three-panel cardstock screen, 8-page adventure book, and 4 character sheets. Published 1984.

To assist smooth play without a lot of page-turning to find the various tables and charts in the rulebook, Pacesetter offers GMs of its ***Chill*** supernatural fantasy RPG the ***Chill Master's Screen***, a three-panel cardstock GM screen printed with the most important charts and tables used in the game. The bonus adventure with the screen is an 8-page adaptation of the first four chapters of Bram Stoker's ***Dracula***, called, appropriately enough, ***Castle Dracula***. It pits one player, as Jonathan Harker, against the wiles of the evil Count himself in an attempt to escape the castle before ending up as food for Dracula's wives. Four blank character sheets backed with the ***Chill*** Action Table in the center of the adventure complete the package.

In spite of the fact that it is closely based on the original novel (which could *really* surprise players expecting one of the movie versions), the ***Castle Dracula*** adventure can be an interesting adventure for a lone player and Chill Master, with enough options to allow more than one play if, as is possible, "Harker" fails to survive the first time. The inclusion of game stats for Dracula, complete with a new Evil Way Discipline, "Slam," is an added bonus so that a CM can use the powerful vampire in adventures of his own, throwing a curve at players expecting to encounter normal, less-powerful Carpathian vampires (or the Dracula of the movies).

The only gripe I have with the ***CM Screen*** as a whole is its placement of some charts the CM could use only on the players' side. But this is a common occurrence with GM screens — it is difficult to fit everything on one side without reducing the type so that it's hard to read. So the CM will still need to resort to the rulebook to check some charts — unless he or she wants to move or peer over the screen.

Overall, though, the ***CM Screen*** should prove useful to most ***Chill*** GMs who like more than an ordinary binder to hide their notes, and the ***Castle Dracula*** adventure can be a fun — if potentially deadly — bonus for those times you can't get together an entire play group.

—William A. Barton

MARVEL SUPER HEROES JUDGE'S SCREEN (TSR); $4.95. Designed by Jeff Grubb. Accessory to ***Marvel Super Heroes***. Three-panel cardstock screen, 8-page 'Hero's Guide to New York' booklet. Published 1984.

It seems that every game needs a GM's screen, and the one for the ***Marvel Super Heroes*** RPG is a pretty good one. The outside of the screen is enameled to provide plenty of protection, and features a map of Manhattan and the Universal Table in full color. On the inside of the screen is the usual assortment of tables for the GM's use, including another Universal Table. The other tables are random NPCs, speeds, weapons and damage, rank numbers, etc. The 'Hero's Guide to New York' is almost more useful than the screen itself, giving a short history of Manhattan, pointing out some of the scenic features of the various areas of the island, giving hints on some of the organizations in the Marvel universe (Maggia, Hydra, SHIELD, etc.), and a very useful section on how to get around Manhattan if you don't fly, hop, swing, or teleport.

The screen is typical, distinguished only by its outside protective covering. The real meat of this package is the Guide. It makes running a campaign in Marvel's New York possible, even if you've never been there.

The Marvel Super Heroes RPG has never had that many tables that require instant access during combat, and some of the tables on the screen were thrown in to take up space. Monetary resources are not likely to be important during combat, but the Resources table is there.

The ***Marvel Super Heroes Judge's Screen*** is a good deal, thanks to the Guide. The two will be of great value to a campaign.

—Craig Sheeley

PUBLICATIONS

THE QUEST (Icarus Games); $7. Written by David Emigh. Generic roleplaying supplement. 60-page booklet. Illustrated. Published 1984.

The Quest deals with the heroic quest in terms suitable for any fantasy roleplaying game. Rather than a book of quests, it's a book about how to design quest scenarios. What sorts of quests? They involve a hero(ine) in search of some goal; this is quite different from the group of adventurers exploring underground caverns in search of gold. The book covers six quests drawn from heroic and mythic literature: the deserving hero's acquisition of a magical sword; the Broken Sword Quest, in which a mythical sword must be reforged; the Unicorn Quest, a virtuous maiden's search for a mount; a quest to rescue a dead companion from the underworld; the killing of a dragon; and the Bride Quest, where the hero seeks to win a wife. Each quest is described including different variants. Interspersed are short stories which illustrate how the quest might turn out. These are interesting in their own right, and offer a much briefer look at the quest than the original works. Emigh stresses that these quests are not to be taken lightly, and offers suggestions as to how they should be run: Give the sword a persona, the boatman a name, the bride a personality; make dragons rare; plan treacheries in advance.

Production quality is excellent. The book is cleanly typeset, with different type styles separating the description from the fiction. (Unfortunately, the art is mostly amateurish.) There's a nicely annotated bibliography in case you feel inspired to do additional reading. Since the same motifs recur in literature, this is a good idea, and the bibliography is a good start.

The biggest problem with the book is inherent in the hero quest itself: Such a quest revolves around a single hero. While the hero may have helpers, they usually play a minor role, and often don't share in the hero's reward (after all, there's only one bride to be married or magic sword to be reforged). While Emigh mentions a party of adventurers, he doesn't give much rationale for anyone but the hero participating. I guess heroes need good friends. A related problem is that the quests are based on literature, and may not fit so well into a campaign with a non-literary flavor. Still, an inventive GM should have no trouble using them.

While the book almost never refers to game mechanics, there is occasional mention of "charisma," a characteristic absent from game systems such as ***RuneQuest*** and ***The Fantasy Trip***. I was a

bit disappointed that the quests and the bibliography are so thoroughly based on European literature. Surely Polynesians, say, go on quests also. And more information is given on how to design than run the scenarios.

This is a unique book: I know of no other which assists in scenario design. It covers its subject matter well. While by its very nature its use is limited, I recommend it as a good way to bring serious quests into an FRP campaign.

—David Dunham

WEAPONS AND CASTLES OF THE ORIENT (Palladium Books; 5669 Casper, Detroit, MI 48210); $4.95. Compiled by Mathew Balent. One 7" x 10" 50-page booklet. Published 1984.

For the fantasy or historical gamer with an interest in the Orient, Palladium Books has released the latest in its series of books on ancient and medieval armaments, *Weapons and Castles of the Orient*. Profusely illustrated, as have been past Palladium efforts, this book offers detailed information on the various staves, polearms, swords, chain weapons, armor types, castles, and fortifications in use in the Far East, from ancient times up to this century. In its section on fortifications it even includes a map of the Great Wall of China.

The detailed depictions of the various weapons will probably prove to be the most useful section for most gamers, particularly those whose interest in Oriental weaponry ends with the recent flood of martial arts/ninja movies. Included are such lethal arms as the chained, sickle-like *kusarigama*, often used by ninja in the movies and on TV's *The Master* — yet omitted from the Ninja section of Palladium's *Weapons and Assassins* book.

What is most distressing about the book is that the weapons section, potentially the most universally useful, is the smallest one in the play-aid — only nine pages as opposed to 17 for castles and *19* for armor. Unless you're really into details on Oriental armor and need plans for several different fortifications, this makes the book hardly worth the price. In fact, a more appropriate title might have been *Armor and Castles of the Orient (with Weapons)*.

For players of Oriental games such as ***Bushido*** or ***Land of the Rising Sun*** who want a great deal of detail, this book should prove most valuable. For others with only a passing interest, it probably isn't worth the investment.

—William A. Barton

MINIATURES

ELFQUEST miniatures: *WOLFRIDERS I, JOURNEY TO SORROW'S END,* and *PERSONALITIES* (Ral Partha); $8 each. Twelve, ten, and eight 25mm-scale figures respectively. Sculpted by Julie Guthrie. Released 1983.

These 30 figures depict characters in Wendy and Richard Pini's *Elfquest* series. *Wolfriders I* provides four standing and four riding elves and four wolves in two different poses. *Journey* contains six standing adults, two children, and a horse and rider. *Personalities* includes seven humanoids and the very large serpent Madcoil.

The detail on the figures is excellent. Julie Guthrie has proven faithful to the Pinis' creation. These figures are like nothing else available to the gamer and collector, but are from a world distinct from the quasi-medieval landscapes of Greyhawk, Middle-earth, and Irilian and the imagined ancient lands of Conan, Elric, or Kane. *Elfquest* aside, Guthrie's sculptings most readily invoke the delicate yet tough Mediterranean antiquity of the late Thomas Burnett Swann and, more recently, the Argive fantasies of Richard Purtill. *Wolfriders I* offers a sufficiently wondrous force to counter the various warg riders more usually found. *Personalities* presents the greatest possibility for roleplaying. Each casting inspires an encounter: a prophecy of Bone-Woman, the spleen of the Priest of Gotara, the abrupt appearance of Madcoil, or the fortuitous intervention of Olbar Mountain-Tall.

There is a fair amount of flash for such delicate castings, but their major problem is that delicacy. When stood beside elves sculpted by Tom Meier in the *Best of Ral Partha* series, the Guthrie renderings come barely to their shoulders. Guthrie elves, however, are not Meier elves, but are perhaps their remote ancestors or diminished descendants. The figures are attractively boxed, but the stiff plastic tray within offers poor protection for Ral Partha's fine craftsmanship. Since the boxes are shrink-wrapped, there is no way of examining the contents prior to purchase. Bearclaw was missing from my *Personalities* set, replaced by an errant Cutter from *Wolfriders I*. A large blister pack with foam rubber backing might have worked better.

These figures are charming and offer a welcome change from the usual historically-inspired figures. The difference is between sword-and-sorcery and heroic fantasy, between an age of iron and an age of stone and bronze. I look forward to the future release of *Wolfriders II* and *Quest to Blue Mountain*.

—Gerard E. Giannattasio

ADVENTURERS and *THREE WORLDS* (Texas Miniatures); $1.10 each for human-sized figures. 25mm metal fantasy figures. Sculpted, respectively, by Max Carr and Richard Kerr. Released 1983.

Texas Miniatures is a new company which got its start by buying molds and rights to a number of the old Heritage lines — for which the hobby owes them thanks, both because Heritage had some good figures, and because Texas Miniatures has been more careful on production quality. Now they're beginning to produce some new lines.

The *Adventurers*, I'm afraid, rate only about a C. There's nothing actually wrong with them — but none are especially original or remarkably well-posed. They stand there, looking like fantasy figures — some with a sword stuck into the air, others just waiting for the next move. The casting is fairly good, and a couple have nice details which will make them good personality figures. The "Mistress of War," for instance, carries a whip; the otherwise-forgettable "Enchantress" has a miniature dragon on her shoulder. On the whole, this line is just — what can I say — generic.

But Richard Kerr's *Three Worlds* line gets a B+ overall, with an A on some of the individual figures. The line comprises four types (so far) of medievally-armed nonhumans: lizard men, ursoids, wolverines, and a "Noehodes Bard" that looks like a giant robed panther playing a harp! All are well sculpted and posed in lifelike manner; my samples had some flash, but nothing serious. The lizard men will be familiar to any fan of Denis Loubet's ***Cardboard Heroes*** figures, or to anybody who remembers the Gorn in *Star Trek*. All in all, a very nice line, and one that deserves expansion.

Don't let the remarkably poor packaging put you off of Texas Miniatures' products — take time to look at the figures. This company is off to a pretty good start, and has the potential to bring us some good-looking metal.

—Steve Jackson

KNIGHTS, FIGHTERS, AND MEN-AT-ARMS (Grenadier Models); $9.95. Twelve 25mm lead miniatures with foam-lined box. Released 1984.

Grenadier's recent release is part of its ever-expanding "Fantasy Lords" line of 25mm figures. Unlike most of the figures in this line, this set can also be used for historical gaming purposes, since the figures are not exotically clothed or equipped, but rather are patterned after 14th- and 15th-century knights and men-at-arms. The set consists of ten figures on foot and one mounted figure. Each miniature is posed in an action stance with a ready weapon. The castings are very crisp, and there is very little flash and few mold lines to clean up.

The detail that Andy Chernak has managed to sculpt into these figures is almost beyond belief. The suits of armor look as if they were taken from the Tower of London and somehow miniaturized to 25mm scale. Every strap and buckle is visible, as are the rivets and the fluted surfaces on the gothic armor. The tiny heraldic bearings on the shields and surcoats are unmatched by any other company. A variety of helmet crests, spare weapons, and shields is included to allow you to customize the figures if you desire.

The figures are equipped with a wide assortment of weapons, including axes, swords, maces, and poleweapons. Perhaps the most unusual figure is the footsoldier with the large shield strapped to his back (pavise) and the two-handed warhammer. The figure came directly from "The Age of Chivalry" (Vol. I) by Fred and Lilanne Funcken, and is definitely the standout figure of the whole set.

My collection of figures currently numbers well over three hundred, and these are the best 25mm knights that I have ever seen from any company. I recommend these figures to both fantasy and historical gamers, as well as collectors who want to own the very best miniatures available.

—Edwin J. Rotondaro

FANTASY LORDS BLISTER PACK SERIES (Grenadier Models); $2.50 per pack. Average three figures per blister pack, or one large-size figure per pack. Sculpted by Andy Chernak. Released 1984.

As part of its expanding "Fantasy Lords" line of 25mm miniatures, Grenadier has released 23 blister packs of assorted figures to fill in gaps in the "Fantasy Lords" range. The blister-pack line includes new creatures as well as supplemental figures for some of Grenadier's existing boxed sets. Among the sets available are *Winged Folk, Monks, Goblins, Casualties, Adventurers, Treasure,* and *Giants*. There are also two sets of skeleton cavalry that fit in perfectly with the boxed set *Skeleton Raiders of the Undead*. The set of Knights also perfectly complements the boxed set *Knights, Fighters, and Men-at-Arms*.

The detail on all the figures is astounding. Andy Chernak's sculpting seems to improve with each new release, and one can easily see why Grenadier's Fantasy Lords line is the bestselling range of 25mm figures in the business. The figures are generally free of flash and have very little sprue to clean up. They are cast in a durable white metal that is flexible enough to allow bending and repositioning a figure without breaking it.

One of the standout figures that comes to mind is a turbaned wizard casting a spell from a grimoire. You can even distinguish the runes on the pages, and the book itself rests on a cloud of smoke! Another fine casting is the monk launching a side kick while supported by a stone pillar. The monk wears a mohawk-style haircut and a karate *gi*. The knight in plate armor with the two-handed warhammer is also a work of art, and a pleasant change from the usual axe- or sword-wielding figure.

The detail and originality of these figures alone would make them a must for any serious collector of 25mm miniatures, but with a price of only $2.50 per set, these figures are unbeatable bargains! If you use miniatures in your fantasy roleplaying, the new Fantasy Lords blister packs are highly recommended.

—Edwin J. Rotondaro

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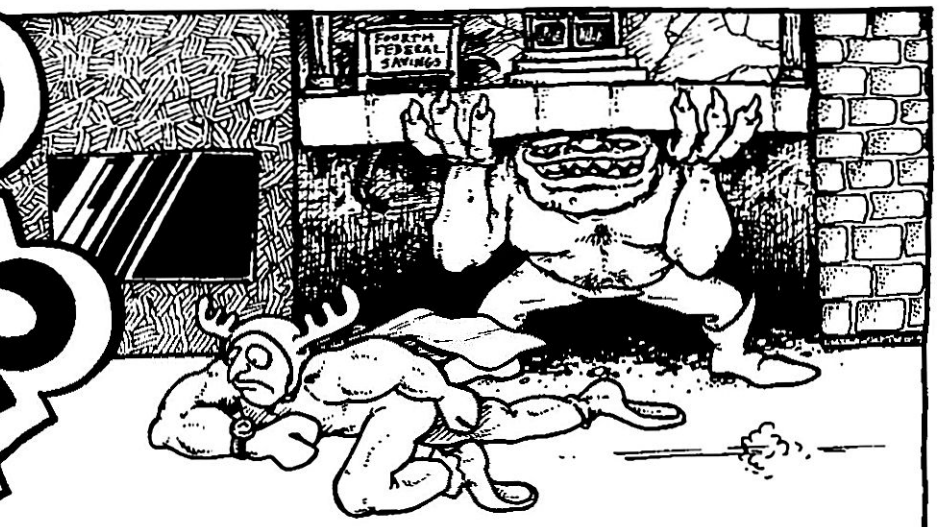

I'M LATE, I'M LATE. FOR A VERY IMPORTANT DATE —
In MARVEL SUPER HEROES (TSR), a hero gains more experience points by showing up at a charity function on time than he loses by not stopping on the way to halt a bank robbery. (.. Steve Peterson)

MAYBE THEY JUST THINK FAST —
Although every character in Blade's MERCENARIES, SPIES & PRIVATE EYES has a "Speed" attribute, there are no rules for movement...

SAUNA AND WET BAR OPTIONAL —
In CAR WARS (SJ Games) motorcycles are 7½ feet wide.

IT'S BEEN A TOUGH DAY —
An ordinary person in Palladium's HEROES UNLIMITED can fully recover from being shot, hit by a car, falling off a building, and having a hundred-pound rock dropped on him from 120 feet — even if it all happens in one day...

(.. Greg Porter)

SCANNER

News from the World of Gaming

Eon Game Line Sold to West End

Eon Products, publisher of ***Cosmic Encounter***, has agreed to sell its entire line of boardgames to West End Games.

"We just weren't able to publicize the games the way they deserved," said Jack Kittredge of Eon. "We were never much as businessmen anyway." The Massachusetts company has not produced a new boardgame in over a year and has not attended the major conventions and industry shows this year.

Eric Goldberg, Research and Development Director at West End Games in New York, hopes to re-release ***Cosmic Encounter*** and another Eon game (either ***Borderlands*** or ***Quirks***) in fall of 1985. "The rules will certainly be rewritten to be better presented and more easily learned," Goldberg said. "We'll probably have more conventional components. We might just go with one board [for ***Cosmic Encounter***], perhaps permitting eight players instead of six. But this is all speculation. We certainly won't do anything to ruin the play quality."

Goldberg said a West End edition of a third Eon game would follow in 1986. "We see the Eon games as part of the same general line as ***Junta***." Originally published by Creative Wargames Workshop, ***Junta*** will be released in a West End edition at the January Hobby Industry of America trade show in Dallas.

Meanwhile, the design team at Eon has moved into computer games. In June CBS Software released Eon Software's word game ***Passwords***, for the Commodore 64. Apple II and IBM conversions of ***Passwords*** will be out soon.

CBS Software is releasing two other Eon games this fall. ***Weather Tamers*** assigns up to four players the task of changing the weather to order in various spots in the country; every change affects the weather patterns in neighboring areas. ***The Argos Expedition*** is a multiplayer game about recovering and identifying extraterrestrial artifacts. Both games are initially for the Commodore 64.

The Eon designers have not entirely abandoned boardgames; they've just done two expansion sets for Avalon Hill's ***Dune***. Their release is timed to coincide with the ***Dune*** movie, due at Christmas. Eon designed the original ***Dune*** game on assignment from Avalon Hill. And Eric Goldberg reports that "perhaps the key to the deal" of West End buying Eon's games was Eon's agreement to do two *more* games for West End. No decisions regarding these new games have been made yet, Goldberg said.

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Down, But Not Out

The biggest news in the adventure gaming industry of late has been the abundance of rumors concerning the imminent financial doom of this company or that company. Here's the latest on three companies that have figured prominently in the rumors — and the real stories on each.

TSR — The rumor that the largest company in the adventure gaming industry has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy is "definitely not true," company Public Relations head Deiter Sturm said. TSR is currently busy publishing modules for its new ***Marvel Super Heroes*** and ***Indiana Jones*** roleplaying games, and it just wrapped up GenCon 17, which Sturm called "by far the most successful" GenCon yet. An estimated 8,500 gamers attended the four-day convention. This is not to say that TSR is without problems — a pair of lawsuits by former employees could cost the company a lot of money, and sales are reported down — but they're not out of business.

Flying Buffalo/Blade — An ambitious series of releases in the first half of the year (including ***CityBook II***, ***Treasure Vault***, and some ***Tunnels & Trolls*** solo adventures) has resulted in a serious crunch of printer's bills. Staff has been cut back severely, and "morale took a beating," survivor Mike Stackpole said. Stackpole is currently hand-moderating a new fantasy PBM that Flying Buffalo has in playtest, with an eye toward using the material for some additional *Catalyst Series* generic RPG aids as well. While things are lean, Stackpole expressed confidence that the company would pull through.

Judge's Guild — "We're hanging on by our teeth and nails," owner Bob Bledsaw said. Bledsaw says there are three more products and three more issues of *Pegasus* magazine waiting on available cash to be printed. JG's problems range from too much returned merchandise to distributors going out of business owing them money. "We'll fight the fires as they come up," Bledsaw said. "Hopefully, it'll pick back up eventually."

Advertisers Index

Advent Games 37
Adventure Systems ..... IFC
Adventures by Mail 8
Central Texas Computing ..... IBC
Close Simulations 41
Companions 62
DAG Designs 14
Dark House 49
DAW Books, Inc. 27
Discount Buyers Group 51
4-Sight 34
Game Designers' Workshop 6, 54
Gamelords 19
Gamescience 23
Gemini Games 47
Graaf 43
Hero Games 50
Mayfair 3
Mystic Swamp 39
New Horizons 36
Pacesetter 5
Quest 60
Round Table 47
Shannondata 56
Steve Jackson Games 57
Strategic Studies Group 59
TL Designs 48
Tri-Tac 33
Vigard Simulations 55
West End Games ..... BC
Zocchi 52

News and Plugs

Strategist's Club Awards Announced

TSR, Inc. announced the winners of the 1984 Strategist's Club Awards at GenCon 17, the TSR-sponsored game convention held in August. The winners were determined by a vote by readers of *Dragon* magazine. Only gaming products published in 1983 were eligible. The winners are:

Best Board Game — ***Dragonriders of Pern*** (Mayfair Games)
Best Roleplaying Game — ***James Bond 007*** (Victory Games)
Best Game (Open Category) — ***Lost Worlds*** (Nova Games)
Best Game Play Aid — ***Ravenloft*** (TSR)
Best Miniature Figure Line — ***Fantasy Lords*** (Grenadier Models)
Best Gaming Magazine — *Dragon* (TSR)

Wargaming Clubs Merge

The American Wargaming Association and the National Wargaming Alliance have merged, forming a new national wargaming club. The new organization has nearly 300 members currently, making it the largest all-hobby gaming club in over ten years. "There are larger special-interest clubs, but we cover all branches of wargaming," AWA president George Phillies said.

AWA's monthly newsletter, *The American Wargamer*, will continue to go out to all members of the new organization. A new name for the organization — most likely "The Strategy Gaming Society" — will be announced after ratification by the membership. The AWA/NWA tournament schedule will continue as before, and members will still be eligible to buy AWA publications at a substantial discount. For more information, contact George Phillies, 1139 Nielsen Court #3, Ann Arbor, MI 48105.

Game Designers' Workshop plans an October release for ***Twilight***, a roleplaying game set during World War III. "It'll be a good modern science-fiction game," GDW's Marc Miller said. Designed by Frank Chadwick, the game supposes a conventional war between the superpowers, with only limited use of tactical nuclear weapons. The initial scenario occurs in Poland, the site of the Russian front after five years of war.

Pacesetter Ltd. plans a number of fall releases, including five new products due out in October alone. The major release will be ***Star Ace***, a science-fiction roleplaying game that Pacesetter's Gali Sanchez says will be much stronger on the swashbuckling aspects of the game than hard science. The first ***Star Ace*** module, ***Ruins of Kankee***, is also due out at the same time. Pacesetter also plans two more modules for ***Chill*** and three modules for ***Timemaster***.

Barac Limited has announced a licensing agreement with Game Designers' Workshop for the production of computer text adventures and play aid programs for the ***Traveller*** game system. The first text adventure, ***Mertractor — The Volentine Gambit***, was demonstrated at Origins '84. ***Mertractor*** is the first of a four-part text adventure series called the ***Starcrystal Campaign***. Each text adventure can be played separately, or played in sequence.

Also due out this year is ***Citizens: The Traveller Character Generator***, a program that generates examples of the 18 ***Traveller*** character types found in ***Basic Traveller*** and ***Citizens of the Imperium***. ***Startown***, a city complete with encounters, shops for obtaining equipment, and other adventures, is also included. Once a character has been created with the ***Citizens*** program and equipped with the ***Startown*** program, that character can then be transplanted directly into Barac's four text adventures.

When One Steve Jackson Just Isn't Enough . . .

Double vision at Origins '84 in Dallas, Texas: Steve Jackson (left), British author of the *Fighting Fantasy Gamebook* series (with Ian Livingstone) and big wheel at Games Workshop and Citadel Miniatures, got into a dispute over company ownership with Steve Jackson (right), American designer of ***Car Wars, Illuminati, The Fantasy Trip, Ogre/G.E.V.***, and the forthcoming ***GURPS***. We'll bet E. Gary Gygax doesn't have this problem . . .

Convention Calendar

Amherst, MA — U-MASS CON, Dec. 1-2. Gaming convention on the University of Massachusetts campus. Contact U-Mass Con, U-Mass Grenadier Society, Box 117, Amherst, MA 01002.

Seattle, WA — RUSTYCON II, Jan. 18-20, 1985. SF con with some gaming. Contact Rustycon, Box 47132, Seattle, WA 98146.

Pasadena, CA — ORCCON 1985, Feb. 16-18. Gaming of all varieties. Contact OrcCon 1985, Box 758, Bellflower, CA 90706.

Houston, TX — CONTEX II, Feb. 15-17. SF con with some gaming, Marion Zimmer Bradley is Guest of Honor. Contact CONTEX II, c/o Friends of Fandom, Box 772473, Houston, TX 77215.

Biloxi, MS — COASTCON VII, March 8-10. SF and gaming con featuring Alan Dean Foster. Contact CoastCon, Box 1423, Biloxi, MS 39533.

Akron, OH — NEOCON IV, March 24-26. Gaming con on the campus of the University of Akron. Contact NeoCon IV, Box 4045, Akron, OH 44321.

West Point, NY — POINTCON VIII, March 30-31. Gaming con at the US Military Academy. Contact Cadet John Surdu, P.O. Box 3206, West Point, NY 10997.

Pensacola, FL — PENSACON '85, April 5-7. SF/comic/gaming con. Contact Pensacon '85, 300 Bayou Blvd. #218, Pensacola, FL 32503.

Columbus, OH — CAPCON '85, April 5-7. Gaming con on the Ohio State campus. Contact Paul T. Riegel, c/o War Game Designs, Box 629, Reynoldsburg, OH 43068.

Danbury, CT — HATCON 3, June 7-9. SF con featuring Ian and Betty Ballantine. Contact Kennedy Poyser, CT SF Society, 108 Park Ave., Danbury, CT 06810.

***Baltimore, MD** — ORIGINS '85, June 27-30. The National Gaming Convention. Practically every game company in the industry wil be here. Contact Origins '85, Box 139, Middletown, NJ 07748.

***Austin, TX** — TEXCON '85, July 5-7. Gaming con. Contact TexCon '85, 8028 Gessner #1805, Austin, TX 78753.

Joplin, MO — OZARKON I, Aug. 3-4. SF/gaming con. Contact Ozarkon I, Box 2151, Joplin, MO 64803.

***Austin, TX** — LONE STAR CON, Aug. 30-Sept. 2. The National Science Fiction Convention, featuring Jack Vance and Richard Powers. Contact FACT, Box 9612, Austin, TX 78766.

*Steve Jackson Games will attend those conventions marked with an asterisk. We may attend some others as well, but we haven't decided.

FINIEOUS FINGERS

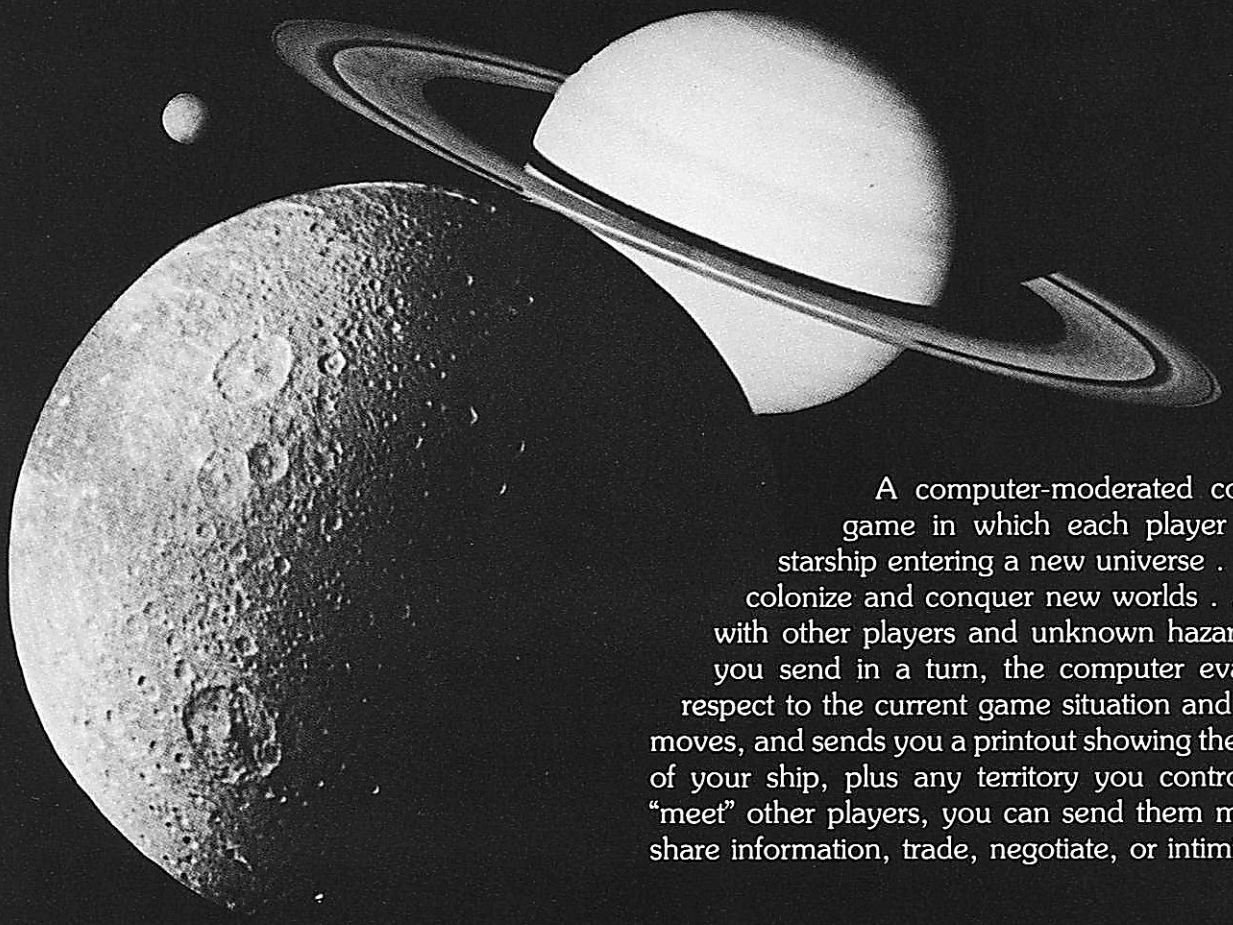
color by Denis Loubet

By J. D. WEBSTER

HMMN, JUST SOME COPPER PIECES AND THESE 3 ODD ARROWS IN HERE.
BUT MAGIC ONES, NO DOUBT; LETS TRY THEM!!
SON OF A GUN! A REAL ARROW OF BACKBITING... TRY THE NEXT ONE!
TWANG!
SHTOOP
WHAT THE !!..
GEE, RUPERT, THIS IS EXCITING! HURRY UP!!
TWING!
...BUT...
GOLLY, MUST'VE BEEN A TRIPLE STRENGTH ARROW OF REVERSE DAMAGE!!
ZIP!
ZIP!
ZIP!
EEP!!
LOOK! THE LAST MAGIC THING YOU TRY ALWAYS TURNS OUT GOOD!
TINK!
...WOUG....
OKAY ...SO I LIED...
AHG!!
GEE, THAT'S AMAZING, RUPERT!
WHAT? THOSE MAGIC ARROWS?
NO! THE NUMBER OF HIT POINTS YOU MUST HAVE...
...BUT...THE MAGIC ARROWS?
WHAT MAGIC ARROWS! DON'T YOU IDIOTS REALIZE WE'VE JUST BEEN SURROUNDED BY A HORDE OF EVIL GOBLIN ARCHERS!
-END-

— NEXT, FINIEOUS VS GODZILLA —

UNIVERSE III



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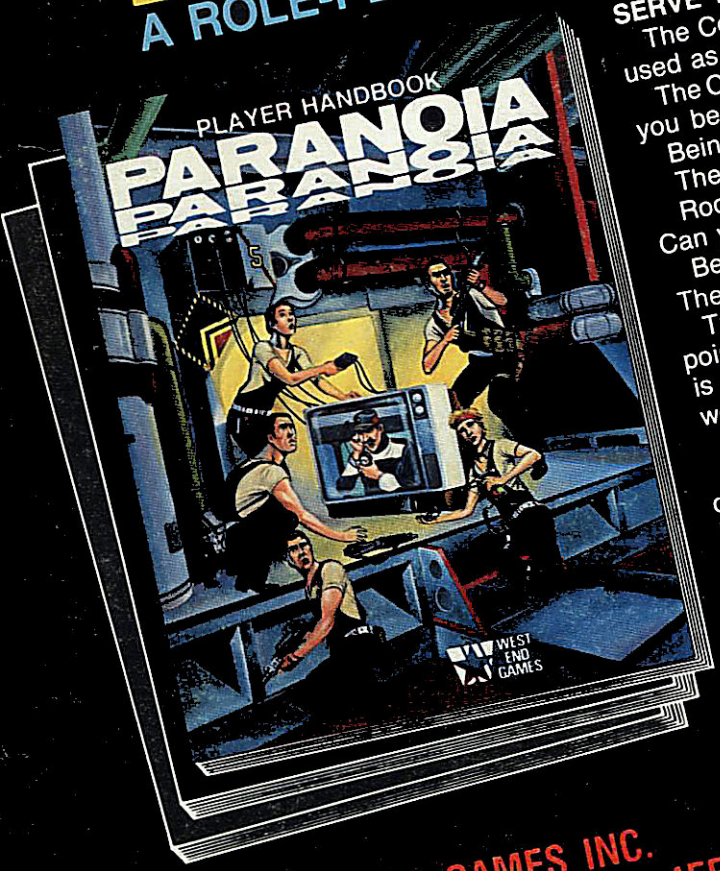

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